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Romanticism

By Lascelles Abercrombie

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PREFACE

DURING the Lent term of the present year, it was my privilege to give three public lectures in Birkbeck College of the University of London: they are here reproduced with some expansion of their form and some addition to their matter.

I am indebted to the editor of the "Times Literary Supplement" for his permission to embody in the first lecture the substance of an article published in that journal several years ago.—Mr. H. O. White, of the University of Sheffield, told me last year of a remarkable anticipation he had found of one of Coleridge's most famous images, and generously allowed me to use his discovery for the purpose of my argument.—I have not attempted to record my debt passim *to previous writers on this topic; it will be evident enough to those who have explored the rather tangled thickets of opinion that have grown up about it. To them, too, it will be evident that my argument is no novelty; and to anyone, that my presentation of it is somewhat desultory. But what, in the present state of opinion, seemed to me required just now, was not an historical account of romanticism, but simply an answer to the question, What do we actually mean by romanticism? The answer could hardly be exhaustive: not, at any rate, in the time I could give to it. All I could do was to suggest that the true answer will always take a certain form; that there are not several answers required (as though romanticism could mean several things); and that the*

explanation here maintained is sufficient to account for any of the innumerable ways romanticism has of making its appearance. It was not, then, in order to bring forward a new view of romanticism that I chose this topic, but merely in order to enforce the argument for what seems to me the true view of it. But not all of those whose authority I could claim for this view would allow it to be true in every direction. That, however, must surely be the test of its truth. If there really is such a thing as romanticism, no pluralistic explanation will do ; we should still want to know how it is that we can call several different things by the same name, unless it is a wanton or slack misnomer. No doubt the word is a misnomer sometimes ; but so is " tragedy." No one supposes that to rule out the newspaper-sense of " tragedy " impairs the reality of tragic art ; and " romanticism " may be purged just as easily.

I am quite aware of the difficulties involved in the distinction between " inner " and " outer " experience which this explanation supposes ; and quite deliberately I have ignored them. To pursue them might have amused philosophy, but would have distracted criticism. It suffices for criticism to use the distinction broadly ; it is in accordance with the nature of the problem proposed, not to set up a clean metaphysical boundary, as between things absolutely discontinuous : but rather, after the manner of psychology, the queen of the inexact sciences, to suggest a shading of one thing into another—each thing being, however, when it is taken well away from the dividing line, unmistakably discernible. Thus, for " inner experience " one might say, " the experience which a man seems to

give himself"; *and for* "*outer experience*" *one might say*, "*the experience which seems* to be given to a man." *Metaphysical questions at once come pouring in; but, in my view, the business of criticism requires no more than the broad and, surely, intelligible distinction.*

For one thing, certainly, I owe my readers an apology; and I am very sensible of it. It is for the frequent appearance in these pages of those dreadful words, "*romanticism*" *and* "*classicism.*" *Such a topic, closely argued, inevitably generates a peculiar jargon: but this is a peculiarly vile jargon—and the irony is, that* "*romance*" *and* "*the classics*" *should be such pleasant words! But the atrocious syllables have meaning which I could not do without; there is no precise substitute for them. My purpose being argument, I have not attempted to mitigate at its expense the deformity of the technical language I was bound to take over.*

L. A.

1926

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FIRST LECTURE

§ 1

THERE is a certain well-known and, it may be presumed, recognisable *quality in literature*, in music, in painting and sculpture—perhaps in other activities as well, perhaps even in life itself—which goes by the name of Romanticism. How it acquired that name, and whether it is a suitable name, are not questions I am concerned with now. I take the name simply as the label everyone nowadays accepts; and I wish to enquire just what it is that the label designates. Why trouble to do that? you may ask. The thing is recognisable, and we agree about the label for it; what else do we want?

Well, there should be a satisfaction in knowing, or even in thinking we know, the inner nature and composition of the thing we tag so easily and readily. There would be a satisfaction too—but it is one I shall not attempt to supply—in making out how it grew into being the peculiar thing we can thus distinctively label. But the best excuse for our

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Well, there should be a satisfaction in knowing, or even in thinking we know, the inner nature and composition of the thing we tag so easily and readily. There would be a satisfaction too—but it is one I shall not attempt to supply—in making out how it grew into being the peculiar thing we can thus distinctively label. But the best excuse for our

enquiry is, that in fact there has been a good deal of argument about tying the label on. We may go up and down literature, or some other art, and confidently tag this specimen and that; but we find that someone else has been on the same business, and has just as confidently labelled a series of specimens which by no means wholly corresponds with ours. What has gone wrong? If I refuse to join in with those who call Wordsworth a romantic poet, is it that my powers of recognition are not so keen as theirs? Or is it, as I should prefer to think, that the phrase "romantic poet" does not mean quite the same thing to me as it does to them? But in that case, what is common to the two points of view? For they must have something in common, or we should never be discussing Wordsworth's romanticism at all. It certainly seems clear, that to allow romanticism to contain everything that has been referred to that capacious name, is to stuff the word so full of miscellaneous meaning that it will be no good to anyone. In any case, it is a word capable of what may seem at first glance remarkable vagaries of meaning. One poet is romantic because

he falls in love; another, romantic because he sees a ghost; another, romantic because he hears a cuckoo; another, romantic because he is reconciled to the Church. The word may be intelligible in all these cases; but not very useful, unless we can see that all these senses somehow converge, and give us common ground. For there is no great interpretation effected by simply tagging several things with the same label.

This is admitted. And for a good many years now it has been a considerable part of the business of criticism, not merely to point out where romanticism occurs, but to explain what this means[1]; for it is admitted also that the word does mark out a quality of first-rate importance, which ought to be understood. Yet if romanticism is one of the famous

[1] Recent instances are: Oliver Elton, *Poetic Romancers after 1850* (British Academy, 1914); Edmund Gosse, *Two Pioneers of Romanticism: Joseph and Thomas Warton* (British Academy, 1915); Walter Raleigh, *Romance* (1916); W. P. Ker, *Romantic Fallacies* (1921, in "The Art of Poetry"); H. J. C. Grierson, *Classical and Romantic* (1923); J. G. Robertson, *Genesis of Romantic Theory in 18th Century* (1923) and *The Reconciliation of Classic and Romantic* (1925); L. Pearsall Smith, *Four Words: Romantic, etc.* (S.P.E. Tract, No. 17, 1924).

topics of criticism, controversy about romanticism is one of the notorious scandals of criticism. With pretty general agreement as to the main direction of recognition—the labelling of the great instances seldom seriously disputed—the least occasion for debate seems, nevertheless, to open up hopeless discrepancies of opinion. Disputed recognition at once seeks to vindicate itself by expounding the nature of the thing recognised: and with that, chaos is come again. "Here," says one critic, "I recognise the romantic spirit; for here is plainly the spirit of freedom, and the return to nature." "Return to nature?" says a second; "but that is the very opposite of freedom; it is the revolt against nature, it is delight in the supernatural, that is romantic." "You are both wrong," says a third, "romanticism is nothing but unprejudiced technical sincerity." "Nonsense," says a fourth; "it is nothing but the reflection of social instability."—And so it goes on. It is the evocation of the past, it is the dissolution of form, it is the individual fighting against tradition, it is a hundred and one things.

But only cowardice would decline to meddle with the wrangle, simply because it is so puzzling a controversy. On the contrary, such controversy as this ought to excite our interest. The dispute can hardly be about a mere chimera; its subject is too recognisable to be that. The pertinacity of the dispute can only be due to the immense variety of shapes the subject can appear in. Attend to this variety or to that, and remarkably diverse conclusions may follow. And yet all the while there may be essentially the same reality underlying all the disputable appearances of romanticism. That is what we shall look for; leaving on one side not only the history of the name, but also the history of our critical consciousness of the thing. Consciousness of a thing (especially when the "thing" is some large way of conceiving things) is deeply influenced by our manner of naming it; but the *origin* of a name may not tell us much about the nature of the thing we have become conscious of. Naming things is apt to be a somewhat blundering process. A name may, for instance, first grasp certain things together in a rude and incondite mass; and then there begins

to emerge in the name some sense of the quality that brought these things together; and then this quality is seen to go spreading out in veins and tentacles far beyond the mass in which it was first noticed. And as the scope of the name expands, precision in its significance becomes more difficult and at the same time more desirable. Something like this has happened with the naming nowadays effected by "romance," "romantic," "romanticism." Its *origin*, thanks to Mr. Pearsall Smith's lucid analysis,[1] is clear enough. The word "romantic," in the sense it now has, was first used to mark certain qualities of landscape capable of somehow suggesting the setting or mood of the medieval "romances." The etymology of the title, and the historical emergence, of these "romances" have, of course, nothing whatever to do with the sense of "romantic"; it is from the accidents of their nature that the modern epithet derives. The thing which "romantic" landscape suggested was the setting or mood of a story which

[1] S.P.E. Tract, No. 17: *Four Words* (Clarendon Press): a model essay in the *higher lexicography*.

put imagination very noticeably above actual possibility. This certainly tells us something important; but it is a mere tentative beginning of the full modern sense of the word "romantic." That sense has vastly expanded beyond landscape on the one hand, and beyond literary preconceptions on the other. The seventeenth century notices of romantic landscape merely drew attention to a typical instance of a certain way of experiencing things, or of fashioning experience, which we now recognise to have been always liable to occur, to be by no means confined to literature, to be, in fact, a universally possible consequence of the mere structure of human nature. But like most things in human nature all this is apt to make a very composite and miscellaneous appearance; and all this we now collect under the name "romantic." In dealing with it I shall concern myself with the essential nature of the thing thus named by an accident throughout its whole expansion, rather than with the historic bearing of the name; with the uses of a word which criticism has found not only intelligible but necessary, rather than with the origin of these

uses. I shall simply assume that when we speak of romanticism we have pickt something, however complex, out of the ruck of things, and made it available for discussion. Our enquiry will be, What is the essence of this thing? How does it appear? Why does it appear in such a variety of shapes?

Some of the controversy about romanticism has, no doubt, sprung from mere misuse of the word. Admit, for example, such a thing as a Romantic Movement, and at once you will have critics who will simplify their duties by seeing everything in that movement as an aspect of romanticism: the truth being, of course, that romanticism was no more in it than a very noticeable element in a very mixt affair. The mere fact that Wordsworth is the great figure in a romantic movement does not compel us to make *him* a romantic: we are not bound to see in him more than the loftiest talent that happened to occur in an age remarkable, amongst other things, for its romantic tendencies. The presumed duty of somehow equating the nature of his achievement with the nature of Shelley's or Blake's achievement—a duty which must appear more

baffling the closer we look at it—is simply and speciously due to the fact that he comes in an age which, in broad contrast with other ages, has been labelled in a lump as "romantic." From our point of view, the importance of the Romantic Movement is, that it set criticism off enquiring into and discriminating the qualities that can truly be called romanticism. And as soon as the word began to acquire a distinct meaning for criticism, it became evident that the thing itself had existed in literature long before criticism had decided how to name it, or had even thought of naming it at all. Everyone nowadays agrees that to trace the origins of the nineteenth-century Romantic Movement takes us far back into the eighteenth century. But it takes us right past the eighteenth century. The thing that came to such a flourishing triumph in Blake, Coleridge, Shelley, Byron and the rest, was indeed, already potent in Walpole, Cowper, Gray and Collins, and had had a preliminary triumph in Chatterton and Macpherson. But there are momentary stirrings of it even in Pope; and whether we should regard these as first efforts of a rising power, or the sub-

siding efforts of power in decline, depends simply on whether from Pope we look forward to Gray, or backward to Dryden.

> What beckoning ghost along the moonlight shade
> Invites my steps. . . . ?

The romantic invitation did not take Pope much further than the intense and impassioned *Elegy to the memory of an unfortunate lady*, and the more expatiating passion of *Eloisa to Abelard.* But it was no beckoning ghost of romanticism that invited Dryden; it was its vivid genius; and it did not so much invite him as command him; and he delighted to obey. His "heroic drama" is continually breaking out into the very tone and accent of pure romanticism. *The Indian Emperor, or the Conquest of Mexico*, for example, opens with the rapturous exclamation of Cortez to his Spaniards in the first wonder of the paradise they have entered:

> On what new happy Climate are we thrown!

and the dialogue that follows is of men who believe they have found at last the country of natural perfection, and lose themselves in relishing the bliss

of breathing in that New World which has been waiting to be discovered ever since man was a being capable of vision and yearning:

> Methinks we walk in Dreams on Fairy Land,
> Where golden Ore lies mixt with common Sand,
> Each downfal of a Flood the Mountains pour
> From their rich Bowels, rolls a Silver Show'r:

the romance not only of exploration and of tropical landskips, but of tropical wealth also, re-echoing the romantic exultation of Marlowe's Barabbas. Or, in *Tyrannick Love, or the Royal Martyr*, the fierce injustice of the power of this world is, at the height of its insolence, supernaturally interrupted; the condemned saint is rescued by a glorious miracle, and the witnesses of the ideal righteousness of things are transported from a loathsome execution into an ecstasy of sensuous delight:

> When, smiling, to the Ax she bow'd her Head,
> Just at the Stroke—
> Aetherial Musick did her Death prepare,
> Like joyful Sounds of Spousals in the Air.
> A radiant Light did her crown'd Temples gild
> And all the Place with fragrant Scents was fill'd.
> The balmy Mist came thick'ning to the Ground
> And sacred Silence cover'd all around.

> But when (its Work perform'd) the Cloud withdrew . . .
> . . . from afar our Sight
> Discover'd in the Air long Tracks of Light;
> Of charming Notes we heard the last Rebounds
> And Musick dying in remoter Sounds:

surely the very romance of virtue divinely vindicated at last!

It is true that romanticism is only an occasional, and a somewhat capricious, visitor of Dryden's poetry; but that is the reason why I bring him so particularly to your notice. He gives us unmistakable instances of romanticism; and yet no one would call him a specifically romantic poet. It is not only in his drama that he has romantic moments. In *Annus Mirabilis* for example, there is the attack on the spice-ships (" By the rich scent we found our perfum'd Prey ") and the costly and odorous carnage it causes:

> Some preciously by shatter'd Porc'lain fall,
> And some by Aromatick Splinters die;

or the anxious sleep that descends on the Dutch fleet, battered and out-fought:

> In Dreams they fearful Precipices tread:
> Or, shipwrack'd, labour to some distant shore;
> Or in dark Churches walk among the dead;

especially romantic in its contrast with the English dreams,

> In fiery dreams the *Dutch* they still destroy,
> And slumbring, smile at the imagined Flame;

or there is the Great Fire, incomparably drawn with many romantic touches, notably when it becomes a supernatural holiday:

> The Ghosts of Traitors from the *Bridge* descend,
> With bold Fanatick Spectres to rejoyce:
> About the fire into a Dance they bend,
> And sing their Sabbath Notes with feeble voice.

And is it not the very genius of romance that tells us of

> A Milk white *Hind*, immortal and unchang'd,
> Fed on the lawns and in the forest rang'd;
> Without unspotted, innocent within . . . ?

Though no one, to be sure, would call *The Hind and the Panther* a romantic poem.

But if it must certainly be allowed that some lively kind of romanticism is a notable element in Dryden (though only one element in him among many) still less can this be denied to his predecessors. Why, the whole Elizabethan drama has been called, with

intelligible exaggeration, the Romantic Drama; and thence it is a short and easy road to one of the most celebrated instances of romanticism in the world, Edmund Spenser; who, indeed, in spite of the nineteenth-century Romantic Movement, may still seem to-day what he seemed to Bishop Hurd in 1762—the very type of romantic imagination. But Spenser points us back to the medieval poets, and points us also, through Tasso, Ariosto and the pastoral writers, back to the poets of still older cultures. If it is absurd, as it certainly is, to see only romanticism in the poets of the middle ages, it is equally absurd to see no romanticism at all in the poets of Latin and Greek antiquity. Far from being a modern affair, romanticism moves in a rhythm that seems to include in its process the whole record of literature. Æschylus was romantic when he saw the towering cliff as a thing brooding apart in lonely thought; or in his vision of the furies, in his ghosts and prophesyings, in his enchanted geography; nay, is he not romantic in the whole temper of his work, with its continual striving to reach beyond the possibilities of imagination?

Plato is a perennial well-spring of romantic dream and feeling. And who, since romanticism became a distinctive term, has dared deny the romantic loveliness of the Odyssey? Nor would the Iliad fail to yield romantic passages; and romantic tones could, without much straining of attention, be detected in Pindar and Simonides, to say nothing of Euripides, Theocritus, Apollonius of Rhodes, Meleager, Longus; in Virgil and Catullus, to say nothing of Lucan and the *Pervigilium* and Ausonius.

§ 2

It is not merely in the interests of confusion that I am advancing these facts—for I believe them to be facts: I mean, facts in criticism, which are by no means exactly comparable with the facts of science or the facts of history. I do, however, wish to indicate that simplicity is not a characteristic of this topic. But from what has been said it is already possible to make out two governing considerations. In the first place, this romanticism is a thing that

enters into the composition of poetry in very variable degrees and proportions. I have mentioned several poets in whom a romantic quality can be clearly discerned, but in whom this is but one quality among many, and not, perhaps, in their whole idiosyncrasy, of anything like primary importance. I should say, indeed, that there can hardly be such a thing as a *great poet* without some tinge of romanticism: to those I have mentioned, I may add Dante, Milton and Goethe. But the mere presence of romantic quality does not carry with it the title of *romantic poet.* Spenser and Shelley are romantic poets because romanticism is their predominant quality: whatever other quality they may have is under this presidency. But if I decline to call Wordsworth a romantic poet, it does not follow that I decline to see any romanticism in him: it is simply that I decline to see him governed by romanticism.

The second consideration follows on this. Romanticism is not an affair of any particular time or culture: still less of any particular style. In a *romantic poet*, whose whole idiosyncrasy is governed

by romanticism, the style will no doubt answer to this state of affairs; though, as romanticism can seldom be an absolute tyranny, even here there will be as a rule other elements also exerting their powers. But our account of romanticism must be equally valid for compositions in which it is both a major and a minor element: not otherwise can we pretend to have got hold of the thing itself. And certainly the thing itself is not to be found in style. Archaisms and neologisms in poetic diction are no more essentially romantic than chromatic harmonies in music. Nor need any revolt against traditional style in itself mean romanticism. There was nothing romantic in the revolt Wordsworth preacht; though it may have helpt romanticism to become predominant in the art of others. But romanticism could exist underneath the strict conditions of the eighteenth century as well as under the liberties of the nineteenth century. The eighteenth-century ideal of style was of something good in itself, which would always be poetically valid whatever the matter might be it was dealing with. Wordsworth's ideal of style was of something which must derive

the arts of Europe.[1] But romanticism is not confined to Romantic Movements; though it is only when romanticism predominates that we can expect to find a specifically romantic style. The purpose of our enquiry compels us to seek out and formulate the romanticism that cannot be accounted for by the style of its diction; as, for example, in Crabbe's *Sir Eustace Grey*. It is the quality of romanticism itself we are after, whether it be one quality among many, or a quality capable of overruling all the others and insisting entirely on its own expression. Very likely, when we casually think of romanticism, we remember something like this:

Like one, that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,

[1] Of course, this vast romantic movement was the European reverberation of English eighteenth-century romanticism, like the thunder of Alpine re-echoing to a pistol-shot. English nineteenth-century romanticism merged the descent of native tendency in the triumphant home-coming of that tendency's influence abroad after its long and immensely prosperous tour of the Continent. But the power of English eighteenth-century romanticism came back to England from its continental journey so augmented and so changed, that only a revolution in poetic theory could have made its admission possible.

And having once turned round walks on,
And turns no more his head ;
Because he knows, a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.

The very stuff of romanticism, exactly suited by the style ! But then, in our enquiry, we must be equally prepared to account for this sort of thing :

As when a swain, belated on his way,
Sees as he fancies through the close of day
A ghastly spectre—struck with pale affright
He measures back the ground in hasty flight ;
Whilst his own shadow by reflection clear
Of silver Luna seen, augments his fear.
At ev'ry breeze, each rustling of the wind,
Startled he stops, yet dreads to look behind.
Still he believes the phantom at his heels
And his cold touch imaginary feels [1]

The date of that is not, for us, the important thing, remarkable though it be. The important thing is that there we have unmistakable romanticism (rendered even more unmistakable by its anticipa-

[1] From " A Poem on Culloden to the Duke of Cumberland," by G. Masters, 1747. (Bib Bodl Godw. P. 1729 [2]) For the communication of this striking parallel to Coleridge's famous stanza I am indebted to Mr. H. O. White, of the University of Sheffield.

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But if romanticism is not a certain style in poetry, what is it? It will suffice to call it, at present, a certain *attitude of mind : an attitude to life and* things which certainly forces itself on our attention when it postures by itself, but which, when once we have distinctly noticed it, may be very frequently remarked unmistakably figuring in groups of other postures and behaviours. What is the peculiarity of the romantic posture, whenever and however it may occur?

§ 3

Nothing has done more to obscure this question than the common assumption that there is an antithesis between romanticism and classicism. The antithesis is wholly improper, because classicism is of a quite different order of things from romanticism. I have referred to romanticism as an *element :* but that metaphor, when used of a thing I have also called an attitude of mind, obviously does not suppose elementary nature as modern chemistry conceives it. I am not thinking of a simple and unanalyzable substance like oxygen and hydrogen, but rather of

tion of *The Ancient Mariner*) which yet clearly does not depend on specifically romantic style. In this eighteenth-century poet, who thus willingly accepts the stylistic ideal of his time, romanticism (what else could it be, in a panegyric of Butcher Cumberland ?) is but one element among several : his style answers, not merely to romanticism, but to the whole of his composition. Whenever his phrasing tends towards romantic predominance, some compensation brings it back to a middle state ; for such predominance did not belong to the poet's instinct. Thus, it would not do to mention the swain's shadow in the silver light, without explaining why ; we must expressly note that this "augments his fear." And no sooner have we felt the phantom's cold touch than we are rationally reassured by the addition of the word "imaginary." Yet clearly, though romanticism is thus a subordinate element in G. Masters, it is essentially the same nature of thing as the romanticism that predominates in Coleridge's lines. It is not so much romanticism itself that is given in a poet's style, as the proportion in which it enters into his idiosyncrasy.

But if romanticism is not a certain style in poetry, what is it? It will suffice to call it, at present, a certain attitude of mind: an attitude to life and things which certainly forces itself on our attention when it postures by itself, but which, when once we have distinctly noticed it, may be very frequently remarked unmistakably figuring in groups of other postures and behaviours. What is the peculiarity of the romantic posture, whenever and however it may occur?

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some characteristic *state*, like the more venerable elements of earth and fire. There are many kinds of earth, and many ingredient substances in it: but all kinds unite in being earthy, all the ingredients contribute to earthiness. But this state is only an element in the stable existence of the world as a whole, the ordered cosmos of interacting earth, air, fire and water. I recall this ancient doctrine merely for the purpose of analogy; for in some such sense as this, romanticism is an *element* of art, contributing to the whole a characteristic state of things, which can hardly be found altogether separate from other states, but which may nevertheless be found predominating. Then what is classicism? Not an element at all, but a mode of combining the elements. I can perhaps make it clearer by alluding to that specialisation of the ancient four-element theory of the macrocosm into a corresponding theory of the microcosm, which made man with his humors an image of the world with its elements. When the humors exist in their proper proportion, none of them predominating, man is in *health.*

Well, classicism is the health of art: the just proportion of the elemental humors in it. If you look for an element of classicism to put against the element of romanticism, you will soon become lost in a quite hopeless search, misled by a false antithesis. There is no element of classicism: but there are elements which can join together in a concord of equilibrium; and such a concord, such a health, is classicism. I do not know how many of these elements there may be, nor if it be possible to make out their number; but one of them is romanticism, and there is another which is immediately suggested by romanticism—suggested by it simply because one thing naturally suggests its opposite. For there is an element directly opposed to romanticism: it is realism. The true antithesis, then, is between romanticism and realism.

To call classicism the health of art does not therefore mean that romanticism and realism are maladies. On the contrary, both are necessary to health, both are present in classicism. Perfect health means, no doubt, that neither romanticism nor realism will be distinctly noticeable; but perfect

health is perhaps as rare in art as in men. When art is a little out of sorts, one or the other may make itself felt; in the midst of classicism, the critical doctor can often pounce on a romantic or a realistic moment; and he welcomes it as a symptom, something he can talk about. For if there were nothing but perfect health, how could he practise his diagnosis? But what should he say when he is confronted with romanticism triumphing in frankly disproportionate predominance—with a Romantic Poet, nay, a Romantic Movement? Is he to talk of flagrant disease and wild-fire epidemic? Well, we need not press too far our analogy with ancient physiology. The romanticism of the romantic poet is precisely the same element as the romanticism we can often detect in the classic poet: the difference is, between the domineering of a single humor and the mutually adjusted proportion of several. The difference is remarkable; but it may only be a critico-medical prejudice which would make the contrast one between fever and health. In any case, fever, we know, can have gorgeous dreams; more exciting, some may think, than the dreams of health.

§ 4

What then is the constitution of this element, this humor, this attitude of mind? What is its essential nature? It might seem as difficult to answer that, as to say precisely what constitutes the earthiness of earth, to formulate the essential nature of earth. For this element of romanticism presents itself in all sorts of embodiments; and it is just in the attempt to extricate the invariable essential thing from its variable and inessential accompaniments that the topic becomes most debatable. It seems, however, that we should have some chance, perhaps not of getting to the point we want, but at any rate of being reliably directed towards it, if we could find a recognisable romantic tendency progressively working forwards in the expression of some particular sentiment or thought or image: though it be only in the peculiar tone of emphasis or [illegible] orientation given to it. We may not get the [illegible] quality unmixt, for the embodiment of quality [illegible] always imply a certain contamination; [illegible] shall see what sort of progress the quality [illegible]

make, and may thereby infer its characteristic peculiarity.

There is nothing, perhaps, in which the romantic quality of feeling is more well known than the sentiment for Views; and it happens that a fortunate series of instances enables us to notice pretty exactly the tendency of this feeling. Views, in fact, came into fashion precisely as romantic feeling became more and more the fashionable thing. What is the quotation that gives us most compendiously and exactly the sentiment for Views?—

'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view!—

product of the very hey-day of romanticism—in England, at any rate.

Weigh that famous line well; and you will hardly fail, I think, to recognise in it a sort of attar of romanticism—of that romanticism, at least, which is contained in the feeling for *nature*: and the romantic feeling for nature is practically commensurate with the feeling for *views*.

Now Campbell did not invent this particular sentiment about distance lending enchantment to

the view; nor did he invent the figurative use to which he put it in introducing the theme of *The Pleasures of Hope*. Behind both the sentiment and its use lies an interesting stretch of poetic history. For Campbell's whole poem is a large expansion and elaboration of a strain of thought which he took over (perhaps unconsciously) from two obscure predecessors—at least, they were obscure in his day: though nowadays both may possibly be a good deal less obscure than he is himself. For who reads Campbell to-day? And when we quote him, do we always know who it is we quote? But Norris of Bemerton is in all the reputable anthologies, and Suckling is in a popular edition, and an excellent one.[1] It is true, nevertheless, that Campbell is, of the three, the poet who made the theme famous. In the first place, when he took it over, it had reacht its full development, and had become matter for an earnestly reflective poem about the conduct of life, instead of, as in Norris and Suckling, simply matter for a moody lyric. And then, in Campbell's

[1] *The Works of Sir John Suckling*, in prose and verse, edited by A. Hamilton Thompson. (Routledge.)

day, it was a theme with all the authority of fashionable feeling behind it. Moreover, Campbell's technique continued the mighty tradition of the eighteenth century, and flourisht into quotable apophthegms. It was certainly not a romantic style; but, though romanticism was now in favour, it was still the fashionable style. For in poetry, fashionable feeling is not always at one with fashionable style. It is not merely that feeling changes more rapidly than manner; the new fashion in feeling may actually become more conscious of itself, when it is at variance with, and struggling against, habitual style. Something of this we find in Campbell's *Pleasures of Hope*.

What Campbell had to say, then, had already been said more narrowly by Norris in *The Infidel*, and much more vividly, and still more narrowly, by Suckling in *Against Fruition*;[1] and the gist of the

[1] Suckling has two poems with this title; I refer to the one beginning "Stay here, fond youth." In both, the idea is used for the sole purpose of Suckling's amatory philosophy.—Cowley also has a poem called "Against Fruition" (in *The Mistress*, 1668); and this too belongs wholly to the theory of love. It is a mere frigid variation of Suckling's theme, and does not allude

ee poems may be summed up roughly thus: Do not get too close to things; they are sure to appoint you if you do." Campbell enforces this recommending—well, *the pleasures of hope:* not ause hope may some day be realised; but hope *se* and absolute, precisely because hope is not lity, because things seen in hope have an air with

e image we are chiefly concerned with. Suckling's warning ainst fruition" is given to the young man, in the interests of pleasure; Cowley's is given to the lady, in the interests of her ndancy.—Norris' poem refers to "fruition" in a larger e, and applies Suckling's doctrine to things in general—but in an occasional mood, not, as in Campbell's poem, in a berate and diligently methodized habit of living. It is not gested, of course, that Suckling and Norris originate the on, or are even the first who distinctly enunciate it. Petronius s absolutely, in the beautiful hendecasyllabics which Ben son translated, the delights of expectation in love, which not be realised in act; and summarizes the superiority of ional delight with a subtle concision which no later romantic rivalled:

hoc non deficit incipitque semper.

d Paul the Silentiary (*Anthology*, IX, 620), putting Suckling's ory of love with brusque dogmatism, anticipates the character- c antithesis of Campbell's romanticism:

ποθοβλήτοις γὰρ ἐπ' ἔργοις
ἐλπὶς ἀληθείης ἐστὶ μελιχροτέρη.

them which things known in reality can never have. But Norris and Suckling are concerned not so much with offering a visionary substitute for reality, as with mere warning against the dangers of what they call *fruition* ; that is, the translation of desire into act, the passage from supposition to knowledge and from fancy to things.

Now all three poets find a type of this in an image expressing the sentiment for Views ; and this is where we first find them expressing a recognisable and progressive romanticism. It is for what they make of Views, then, that we shall chiefly consider them ; and by this we shall hope to learn from them in what direction the tendency of romanticism points. But we shall not forget that, by all three poets, the sentiment for Views is used figuratively, to indicate some theory of living. Romanticism itself may then be a theory of living : perhaps even a theory of being.

With the image we are to consider, Campbell's *Pleasures of Hope* starts off. If he did not intentionally adopt it from Norris, the accidental similarity is very remarkable, for all the expansion he gave

it. But Norris's poem is itself a deliberate restatement of Suckling's, including the image which Campbell used; the whole notion of the poem is made more general, and the image used in a larger application. The three poems show us the same sentiment, in the symbol of the same image, being progressively modified by a certain influence. Good fortune caps all this with a passage from an Elizabethan, where we find a corresponding sentiment used in a similar way, before that influence had begun to exert itself. Our question is, what is that influence and what change does it produce? And first we must note that our instance of the Elizabethan idea of Views—an idea we should nowadays call wholly unromantic—is again frankly the type of a theory of living.

Here, then, is our series of quotations:

From Harry Porter's *The Two Angry Women of Abington* (1599):

> . . . As prospectives, the nearer that they be,
> Yield better judgement to the judging eye;
> Things seen far off are lessened in the eye,
> When their true shape is seen being hard by.

From Sir John Suckling's *Against Fruition* (before 1646):

And as in prospects we are there pleas'd most,
Where something keeps the eye from being lost,
And leaves us room to guess. . . .

From John Norris of Bemerton's *The Infidel* (before 1678):

Distance presents the object fair,
With Charming Features and a graceful Air,
But when we come to seize th' inviting prey,
Like a Shy Ghost, it vanishes away.

From Thomas Campbell's *The Pleasures of Hope* (1799):

Why to yon mountain turns the musing eye,
Whose sunbright summit mingles with the sky?
Why do those cliffs of shadowy tint appear
More sweet than all the landscape smiling near?—
'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view,
And robes the mountain in its azure hue.

§ 5

Thus it appears that, in the two hundred y
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ment for Views has moved through exactly hal

revolution: it has turned upside-down. What would Porter, with his Jonsonian friendliness to the facts of life, to whom

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what would downright Harry Porter make of Campbell, with his yearning pleasure in "distance"? Nothing but a woeful lack of "the judging eye"! Suppose we had him here among us. "I like *prospectives* well enough," he would say; "though, to be sure, I've no notion of giving much of my time to them. Yes, I quite like them: but not too far off. I like to be sure just what it is I like. I don't care for being cheated; and things far off are terrible cheats: they are not half so fine when you get close to them. The truth is what the judging eye looks for. No shadowy tints for me; but the right clear shape of things, and the right clear colour of things: no more distance between me and the shows of things than will give me as sharp and vivid a sight of them as may be."

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of whimsical perversity and refining subtlety. " I would have you note," Suckling would say, " that there are more delicate pleasures than these. I think of that deliciously unsatisfied desire for a woman, in the mood in which one likes to stay unsatisfied, and merely to *guess* at satisfaction : for, as I have elsewhere[1] said,

> That monster expectation feeds too high
> For any women e'er to satisfy.

The best thing our minds can do for us is

> In keeping us in hopes strange things to see
> That never were, nor are, nor e'er shall be.

It is much the same with Views, or prospects. The really pleasant thing in them is a certain blur or dimness, which prevents the eye from being lost in a throng of things positively known, and at the same time stirs one to guess at the infinite possibility the blur contains of things which might be known."[2]

Certainly, a decided change from Harry Porter.

[1] In the other *Against Fruition* (" Fie upon hearts," etc.).

[2] It must be admitted that the sense of Suckling's lines is a little vague ; though there can be no doubt about the way they

But Suckling is just as sure as Porter what it is that pleases him. He delights in his own fantastic ingenuity; the positive experience of his senses is far too slow to keep up with the nimble vagaries of his craving; and he welcomes that state of things which, by compelling him to fill in the blanks in sensuous experience, encourages him to revel in the notions of things "that never were, nor are, nor

are intended to illustrate an argument which reaches its climax in the famous couplet:

> Women enjoy'd (whate'er before th' have been)
> *Are like romances read, or sights once seen.*

The poet then brings in his "prospects . . . where something keeps the eye from being lost"; and by the context "lost" must mean "lost in a crowd of pretty details"—overborne and bewildered by the handsome profusion of reality. Then what is the "something" which thus preserves the eye from being "lost"? We may assume it is *distance*, which is in any case characteristic of "prospects," and seems the quality obviously suggested by the whole purport of the poem. But I suppose it might logically be anything which would have the effect proposed—smoked glass, for instance, or the interposition of a large opaque obstacle. Still, one would hardly expect the poet to welcome such things as a manifest aid to pleasure. Waller, in the poetic argument which he composed "In answer of Sir John Suckling's verses" (proving himself thereby no match for Suckling's dazzling rapier), seems to have had some doubt of the

e'er shall be." But to him succeeds Norris of Bemerton, good man, good thinker and very tolerable poet; and now we have pleasure in "charming features and a graceful air," when "Distance presents the object fair." And what precisely are the charming features, the graceful air, of a View?—Why, the fact is, that Norris does not precisely know; and what is more, he likes not knowing. Yes, the pleasure in the distant View begins to consist in not exactly knowing what it is that is

exact sense of these lines; he replies, rather cautiously and vaguely,

> In goodly prospects, who *contracts the space*,
> Or takes not all the bounty of the place?

but as he goes on seems to decide that Suckling is referring to distance, though he does not ignore the possibility that an obstacle may also have been meant:

> We wish removed what standeth in our light,
> And nature blame for *limiting our sight*.

That last line is, of course, typical of an attitude exactly opposed to Suckling's—the rationalist or at any rate anti-romantic attitude we have already had in Harry Porter: the dislike of distance as a thing injurious to the certainty of eyesight. It is plain, at any rate, that distance may be included in Suckling's "something"; and that is how Norris understood it when he recast the whole idea of the poem.

pleasant. Short sight preferring to look at nature without spectacles—pleased inability to see nature clearly: that seems to be what we have come to. The blur given by distance is no longer enjoyed because it provokes the mind to question it: the actual blur itself is enjoyed: this is the "charm" of a distant view that vanishes "like a shy ghost" when you are too near—a "charm" consisting in the very fact that it will not bear inspection. It cannot be "seized." Yet it "entices": Norris would like to get close to it if he could.

But in Campbell the tendency has advanced a step further: indeed, so far, that it would be difficult for romanticism to announce itself more clearly. If Norris's pleasure is vague compared with Suckling's, Campbell's pleasure is vague compared with Norris's. Suckling likes the blur of distance because it sets his mind working; Norris likes the blur simply because it is a blur. The tendency makes an exactly similar advance from Norris to Campbell. Norris likes distance because it gives him this agreeable blur (which he calls "charm"); but Campbell likes distance simply because it is distance.

That is to say, the one likes a visual effect, the other likes a notion. For Norris, " Distance presents the *object fair* " : *his mind is on the object made fair by* distance ; distance is nothing to him except for what it does to the object, and he healthily regrets that he cannot have the effect without the distance. But when Campbell says, " 'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view," his mind is on distance itself. For

Why do those cliffs of shadowy tint appear
More sweet than all the landscape smiling near ?

It is not that " the cliffs of shadowy tint " make a better appearance ; *it is simply that they are further* away : that is what Campbell likes to feel. He finds remoteness peculiarly satisfactory in itself. He notes indeed the " azure hue " of the distant mountains ; but he does not say this is a pleasanter colour than the hues of the " landscape smiling near." On the contrary, he is at pains to assert the beauty of the foreground, in order to bring out the point of his preference for the distance. Norris's point is the fair presence of " the object " ; Camp-

bell's point is the enchanting presence of "distance." —A difference chiefly of emphasis, perhaps; but a real distinction, important to our enquiry.

For we can see now, in this series of progressive expressions of the sentiment for Views, the direction of that tendency which has certainly arrived at romanticism in Campbell, if it was not romantic in Suckling and Norris. Is it a tendency towards softness, slackness, vagueness of feeling, an influence that begins as a stimulus and ends as a narcotic? That may be true; but it would not be a very helpful conclusion, for it would not apply to other instances of romanticism; and fortunately it is not the only conclusion. We can, I think, make out a somewhat more definite direction in the romantic tendency we have been considering; we may say that it is clearly *a tendency away from actuality*. We see the spirit of the mind withdrawing more and more from commerce with the outer world, and endeavouring, or at least desiring, to rely more and more on the things it finds within itself. And we may remind ourselves once more, that this particular sentiment is but a type of larger matters. The

romantic feeling for Views leads us, in fact, to the romantic theory of living. Thus, we find Harry Porter using his version of the pleasure in "prospectives" (which would bring them as *near* to him as possible) to illustrate his opinion that affection thrives best on intimate knowledge, and is certainly useless without intimacy; and this belongs to a general habit of mind which loves to go out into the world, and live confidently and busily in the stirring multitude of external things: the habit of mind which has acquired the name of *realism*. But Suckling uses his version of the sentiment for Views in order to recommend that affection had better keep its distance, and rely not on knowledge of its object at all, but simply on its own internal energy; and the others follow this up with the corollary that in all respects life in this world is likely to be most satisfactory when the mind withdraws from outer things and turns in upon itself. That is the habit of mind which has acquired the name of *romanticism*.

§ 6

In this particular case, in the sentiment for Views, the romantic tendency seems to have come to a rather ignominious result. Its main direction is one of mere withdrawal; and the influence we set out to find, the influence under which this sentiment has been progressively specialized, looks very like a species of timidity—the fear of the real. But timidity is not the only factor in a retreat; it may not be a factor at all, for apparent retreat may turn out strategic victory. We have, at any rate, found nothing that looks like a rout. Timidity by itself is certainly not enough to direct a constant and steady movement; there must be some point of confidence, on which the movement may focus itself. If the sentiment for Views implies withdrawal, it also implies something to withdraw to. What this is, has already been suggested: romanticism is a withdrawal from outer experience in order to concentrate on inner experience. It is a rough and ready distinction, not at all well adapted for metaphysical discussion; but it is familiar and

pretty intelligible, and we shall find it convenient. But why has this movement occurred, and what does it signify? If the retreat is strategic, what is the victory it aims at? Another series of instances may help us towards an answer to these questions. It must be one illustrating romanticism on the positive and confident side this time, not the negative and mistrustful. The sentiment for Views shows us romanticism drawing back from things *perceived*. We now want to see what gives romanticism its confidence in things *conceived*—that inner experience on which it tends to concentrate. Fairies suggest themselves here.

Romanticism, of course, has no monopoly of inner experience. The feeling of *distance* in a view—which is an inner gloss on things perceived—is not in itself romantic; but it is made over to romantic sentiment, when the importance of this inner element is emphasised at the expense of the outer. So, too, fairies are not in themselves romantic; but latterly the romantics have captured them: and in just the same way. So thoroughly have they captured them, indeed, that fairies now seem to stand per-

fectly for romanticism; and one of the reasons for miscalling Shakespeare a romantic is the fact that he, too, had a triumph in fairyland. But it had very little to do with romanticism. Before we come to that, however, let us see what report poetry gives of the life of the fairies, when we first begin to hear about them. We must go to Ireland for that; and it is a fact which would probably sharpen in most minds the expectation of something inherently romantic in fairy-nature. Well, this is from the late Kuno Meyer's version of an ancient Irish poem, "The Hosts of Faery":

> They scatter the battalions of the foe,
> They ravage every land they attack. . . .
> Good they are at man-slaying,
> Melodious in the ale-house,
> Masterly at making songs,
> Skilled at playing chess.

And that, presumably, was in the days when "all was this lond fulfilled of Faerie." Melodious in the ale-house! Everyone has heard that the fairies were once as tall as we are; their history records such a continuous shrinkage of stature, that some

have thought we need only look to the mathematical necessities of optics, rather than to

> the grete charitee and prayers
> Of lymytours and othere holy freres,

in order to explain aright the fact that "now kan no man se none elves mo." But however that may be, the thing we now have to consider is the relationship between these ancient Irish fairies and romance; or rather, to consider the complete failure of the fairies, when they were in their prime and at the height of their stature, to establish any recognisable relationship at all with romance. For, though you stretch the meaning of romance till it cracks, it cannot be extended over these heroic creatures who "scatter the battalions of the foe," these ideal companions and men of the world, "melodious in the ale-house" and "skilled at playing chess." Instead of being romantic, they are, on the contrary, creatures with a vivid air of unusually downright and solid actuality; but we have to note, further, that they are at the same time frankly impossible creatures, because their life is a kind of perfection.

Romanticism

And now consider the fairies when they had lost their heroic stature and their soldierly manners, but had not yet so diminisht as to become specifically the "little folk"; turn, that is, to the fairies of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Is this romantic?—

> The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale,
> Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me.

The magic of the divinest poetry in the world must not confuse us. When in the Attic woods the two troops of fairies meet, and that lovely quarrel begins with the bewitching words

> Ill-met by moonlight, proud Titania!

it is not romance that has come on the stage; it is a kind of life that is exquisitely impossible because it is exquisitely perfect, but nevertheless has an air of supremely vivid reality: the point being, however, that, in spite of that assured air, we are not for a moment required to take these fairies for a version of anything that does or could exist outside the enchantment of the play. We are not required to take them for anything but what they so apparently

are. It is just the same with the next stage, the Herrick stage, when fairies have finally become what they were for an enchanted moment in *Romeo and Juliet*—atomies, little people, Tylwyth Teg. Nothing could be better than Herrick's poetry for the particular kind of fairy-life it celebrates—the perfection of whimsical littleness; and, except perhaps the brilliant miniature into which Mercutio's ingenious fantasy transmutes his downright common sense, nothing could be more unromantic:

> A little mushroome-table spred,
> After short prayers, they set on bread;
> A Moon-parcht grain of purest wheat, . . .
> . . . which done,
> His kitling eyes begin to runne
> Quite through the table, where he spies
> The hornes of paperie Butterflies: . . .
> . . . what would he more,
> But Beards of Mice, a Newt's stewed thigh,
> A bloated Earewig, and a Flie; . . .
> . . . to these, the slain Stag's teares;
> The unctuous dewlaps of a Snaile;
> The broke-heart of a Nightingale
> Ore-come in musicke; . . .

and so on through the astonishing feast, realised with

the most absurd conviction; and when the feast has been solemnly eaten,

> *... we'll present our Oberon, led*
> *Halfe tipsie to the Fairie Bed. ...*

Here it is clearer than ever; these fairies are, on their minute scale, far too deliciously and vividly like our own reality to exist outside poetry. We know too much about fairies that say grace, and then get tipsy, to believe in them. They have, of course, in their tiny and fantastic way, a peculiar reality of their own, just as Polyphemus and Galatea have theirs; the reality which imagination has simply by virtue of being imagined—they exist in our reality: they exist because poetry exists. But they are content with that; they do not demand any further belief of us than the belief that we can imagine what we please in terms of the life we know.

But indeed—Hob, Mab, Puck: these are surely not the names of creatures romantically inclined! We need not call in Drayton (who could christen a fairy Pigwiggen) to confirm us in the conclusion, that fairies are under no obligation to be romantic. But when they are romantic, what are they like?

We come back to Ireland : though not by any means to an Ireland like that twelfth-century Ireland in which fairies are "melodious in the ale-house." Mr. Yeats, better than anyone else, can tell us of the romantic fairies :

> We who are old, old and gay,
> *O so old !*
> *Thousands of years, thousands of years,*
> *If all were told.*

When the romantic note sounds, there is no mistaking it ; and here, unquestionably, we have it. And how do the romantic fairies, of whom that is a characteristic utterance, contrast with the fairies of Herrick and Shakespeare ? Very decisively. In the first place, they are strange, shadowy, perplexing, unapproachable—everything that negatives an air of specious and vivid reality.[1] But, in the second place, along with this, they manage to suggest to us that they are by no means impossible creatures ; rather, that very likely they do quite positively

[1] Compare the vague, suggestive delineation of the romantic fairies with the blur of a romantic View ; whereas compare with Harry Porter's notion of a View the minutely detailed clarity of the fairy life in Shakespeare and Herrick.

exist, in some incomprehensible way; and that poetry, far from having invented them, has somehow just managed to hear about them.

> How shall I name you, immortal, mild, proud shadows?
> I only know that all we know comes from you. . . .

Decidedly, we have not much definite, detailed information about these romantic fairies: but decidedly also we are expected to believe in them: because Mr. Yeats himself believes in them. Yes, that is the criterion; fairies are romantic, when they are the fairies a romantic *believes in:* really and truly believes in. Romantic fairies do not take their reality from poetry; on the contrary, when they are the topic, poetry seems to draw on reality precisely because of its concern with the fairies. They do not exist simply because they have been imagined, with no more authority than the mere act of imagination can give; rather, imagination reaches, in them, an existence superior to anything the senses can know. That is to say, in reaching towards it, the poet is concentrating the force of his belief inwards. For as that existence claims his

confidence, so he withdraws belief from the life known to his senses. It becomes, for him, a vaporous illusion, this life of the senses ; and when his fairies must *appear* (either to him or to his readers) in its deceitful and inadequate terms, it can only be because the images of sense have become a shadowy hinting mystery, with something formidably, inexpressibly *real* hidden beyond it. Only the inner life can respond to the presence of that reality ; only by concentrating belief inwards can that reality be felt.

Thus, the tendency of romanticism, in the matter of fairies, goes in just the same direction as the tendency in the matter of Views : from without inwards. Think of asking Shakespeare or Herrick whether he really and truly believed in his fairies ; whether he could give such authority to imagination, as quite to take charge of his senses ; whether, say, he would ever expect, going for a sober country walk, to come upon a fairy sitting in the hedge-bottom, as a distinguisht modern romantic did. But indeed the unromantic fairy professes to be no more than a certain mutually accommodating

balance between the claims of imagination and the claims of sense. Imagination claims the right to conceive what life would be like, if it were perfect in some limited quality: if it were unfailingly heroic, or freed from all economic pressure, never tired of gaiety, radiantly at home here on the earth; or even if it merely transposed its self-important fuss into the tiniest scale we can think of. Sense at the same time claims the right to make whatever is conceived absolute in terms of perception: out of its infinite wealth to bestow on imagination the substance and definition of actuality. There is no suggestion, in Shakespeare and Herrick, that the imagery of their fairyland is in the least inadequate to its conception: the one is exactly poised against the other. But the romantic fairy is the complete destruction of that balanced accommodation. And why? Because, for a romantic poet, to conceive the life of a fairy is to conceive of a reality the importance of which transcends anything that can be certainly known, a reality that stretches beyond human experience, only to be expressed in the unavoidable ineptitude of a symbolism, only to be

felt by the life within. He believes in his imaginative experience, because he believes this is a motion his spirit has received from the impulse of vast affairs outside the scope of his understanding. There is something more than human in his fairies; some ultra-human kind of existence intrudes upon our consciousness, when the fairies of romanticism pass along its borders. These are, no doubt, especially the fairies which haunt what we call the Celtic mind: fairies often as sinister and disturbing and ungovernable as the fairies of classicism—the fairies of Shakespeare and Herrick, of minds justly balanced between inner and outer things—are kindly and engaging and, even in their mischief, entertaining. When I speak of "the Celtic mind," however, I do not mean simply the mind of a certain race, nor even the mind that inhabits a certain climate; for, as we have seen, twelfth-century Ireland could be as unromantic in the matter of fairies as seventeenth-century England—and, as far as I can make out, Ireland then was equally unromantic in its sentiment for nature: the *views* its poetry draws, at any rate, consist so entirely of minute and sharp exactitude

of detail as to suggest complete agreement with the taste of Harry Porter, with his

> prospectives the *nearer* that they be
> Yield better judgement to the judging eye.

But certainly nowadays, whatever it be that has so potently co-operated with race and climate (politics, economics, religion, or what not ?), the Celts of Ireland and the Highlands and Islands of Scotland are the people to tell us of romantic fairies : witness not only Mr. Yeats, but John Gregorson Campbell's *Superstitions of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* and J. F. Campbell's *Popular Tales of the Western Highlands*—two inestimable collections of fairy treasure. Continually here, what we are told of the life of the fairies is the merest indication of something beyond all telling: these sinister, uncontrollable beings, while they are sheer bewilderment for the senses, are ambassadors to the imagination from the regions of ultra-human power ; of, in fact, the Unknown. Now the power of the unknown can only reside within. The senses can but deal with what they know ; if something is felt beyond—

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what they know, it can only be drawn from the life within. Nothing beyond what is known can be drawn from the world without; for the world can only be "without," in so far as it is known; the word "without" refers to a quality only possest by known things. It is the inner life that is continually threatened by the unknown. At any rate, not to make the matter too metaphysical, only the imagination can conceive of the possibility of the unknown, and only the imagination can feel its power. Fairies are romantic, then, in proportion as they are believed to convey this power: in proportion as their apparition is symbol of the inner experience.

But have the English no romantic fairies? None so romantic as the Irish and the Scots; but a tinge of romanticism is often clear enough in English fairies. What, for example, can hardly be found in the fairies of Herrick and Shakespeare, tinges very decidedly the fairies in Milton's youthful poem, though they are only there for a whimsical metaphysical conceit:

Romanticism

> Good luck befriend thee, Son ; for at thy birth
> The Faiery Ladies daunc't upon the hearth ;
> Thy drowsie Nurse hath sworn she did them spie
> Come tripping to the Room where thou didst lie ;
> And sweetly singing round about thy Bed
> Strew all their blessings on thy sleeping Head.

Ens, Father of the Ten Predicaments, says this to his eldest son Substance. Nothing, one would think, romantic in that !—though to be sure it carries with it a remarkable involution of half-fantastic, half-philosophical meaning. But the fairies themselves are surely romantic. Herrick's and Shakespeare's fairies have completely forgotten what it means to be superstitious : they have a much more equable and lovely significance than that. But the fairies of Milton (*anno ætatis* 19) came dancing into his metaphor straight out of popular superstition, with its ancient romanticism still clinging about them. And what is it we notice, when we notice their romanticism ? Why, just that they come as messengers announcing the mysterious reality of some inconceivable power—the power, in this case, conferred on Substance, eldest of the *Predica-*

ments! Fairies, in Milton's youthful mind, can throw their romanticism even over the Aristotelian logic.

But a more easily recognisable case would be the fairies in the charming fourteenth-century lay of *Sir Orfeo*: not because the poem is set down in literary history as a "romance," for we are not bound to find romanticism in everything that is called a romance (a name which may indicate no more than historical considerations of date, influence, and origin); but because the fairies who stole Dame Heurodis out of King Orfeo's orchard, in spite of warning and every earthly precaution, obviously represent the "other world," and its incalculable and wholly irrational policy of interference with this world. The glimpses we catch of fairy gaieties and ceremonies are clear suggestions of a life that goes on in a reality parallel to ours, but somehow of a superior security, blithely ignoring our press of passions and anxieties, as though fairies were the life that is happily awake in the sunlight, and we were the dreams that perplex themselves in the night: and yet their waking and our dreaming

mysteriously co-exist, and proceed side by side: nay, occasionally their light and power condescend to invade and deride our shadows and our impotence, in this dark prison of material existence. But the supreme instance of this effect, given in a story of a mortal stolen out of this world by the fairies, is of course *Kilmeny*: an instance which, though political history and political geography may call it Scotch, does not take us, in language or anything else, outside the range of English romanticism. Hogg's fairies, though startling power is given to them, are nothing like the sinister, malevolent, dreadful fairies of the Highlands and Islands. The whisper that the Ettrick fairies might steal a mortal in order to pay him to hell, "like a kane-cock," seems to have been a libel; and it is the worst that is said of them. When there was a scare about them, as like as not they had some freakish piece of benevolence in hand. In a word, the full power of the *unknown* is not felt in them; for the fullness of that power is altogether fearful.

§ 7

If, then, romanticism, in the tendency it shows in the sentiment for Views, seems merely to retreat from insistent actuality, in order to lounge in some untroubled lassitude of feeling; it may also appear, in the symbolism of the fairies, as a keen hostility to actual things, concentrating itself on the fortress of the interior, in order willingly and heartily to place itself under the command of the unknown, infallible prince who rules there, and thence directs his offensive. Romanticism, in fact, though it often comes before us with a weary and lamenting air, can be every whit as confident and determined and forceful as its opposite champion, realism.

But so far we have only seen—or rather, we have only inferred—the direction of the romantic tendency by observing from outside its effect on one kind of sentiment or another. This leaves, naturally, a good deal still unexplained. Is it really possible to derive all the multitudinous varieties of romantic-

ism from this single tendency? And why does the romantic poet believe so vigorously in the superior validity of inner, imaginative experience over outer sensuous experience? What we now require is, not to observe this or that aspect of romantic tendency, but to place ourselves, if we can, in the mind of a poet who will confess himself an absolute romanticist: or, let us more safely say, an out-and-out romanticist; a poet, that is, who is prepared to make romanticism serve as a theory of being, and so, we may fairly expect, show us, though it be only by implication, the capital romanticism from which all the varieties may be understandably derived. But he should also be a poet whose mind will let us see just why he feels himself secure when he rests in romanticism, and who may therefore typify romantic inclinations. Our enquiry would be best served by a philosophical poet; one of those to whom it has not occurred that argumentative experience need ever be separated from sensuous and imaginative experience. But since philosophical poems, to the loss both of philosophy and poetry, are no longer written, we must turn to antiquity for

what we want. I believe we may find it in Empedokles. If so, besides the fact that philosophy was for him one with poetry, he has this further advantage for our enquiry, that he is not merely a romantic. In itself, this is nothing very remarkable. Romantic *moments*, indeed, are common enough in poets who are classicist in their whole intention; but there are also poets who, like Dante or Shakespeare, are romanticist and classicist by phases or stages in their development. In *La Vita Nuova*, or in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Richard II*, we have a complete phase of romanticism in a poet who subsequently adjusted the balance of his art. So too in Empedokles we have a complete phase of romanticism; whether it came before or after his equipoise in classicism, I do not know, though I should suppose, in this case, that romanticism was the concluding phase. But whatever mood he was in, Empedokles was a philosophical poet. For our purpose, it is no matter which came first. The thing is, when he is a romanticist, he is an out-and-out romanticist, making this the source of his philosophy: but we can distinguish the character

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of the romantic Empedokles, the devotee of his own inner experience, by setting it beside the Empedokles who could dissolve inner and outer experience in the harmony of classicism.

SECOND LECTURE

§ 1

EMPEDOKLES wrote before philosophy had disentangled itself from poetry; and by poetry I mean much more than the metrical and other conventions of poetic language. The two activities, in his day, admitted of no distinction: to be a philosopher was one way of being a poet.[1] I cannot discuss his poetry, therefore, without referring to his philosophy; but I shall analyse his philosophy as little as possible—only in order to

[1] It was, for instance, as much a poetic as a philosophic act of Herakleitos' mind, to identify the original substance, or rather the essential *Becoming*, of the world with *Fire*. This was at once an emblem of his intellectual position, and of his personal exultation in the world he saw from that position. For indeed the world of his understanding, and the rapture of understanding it, were not, for him, separable at all; the two united in one experience, and Fire was its symbol: at once a philosophic theory and a poetic expression. Of course it is not my intention to assert that the earliest philosophers all wrote in *verse*. Still, the use of verse by Parmenides and Empedokles is nothing incongruous with their matter.

corroborate what the poet has to say. It may seem somewhat arbitrary to introduce a distinction which would have been unnatural to Empedokles himself, and to concentrate on what *we* call his poetry: but the distinction having been made, it is hardly feasible to go back on it. Moreover it absolves me from handling some very troublesome questions —though to be sure his philosophy is remarkably interesting: this extraordinary person (whose energy went out in so many directions, that the account of his achievements might seem to go the whole round of life's possibilities) was incapable of doing anything uninteresting. The stamp he set on habitual thought and habitual language survives to this day throughout Europe. Nowadays, no doubt, his philosophy looks pretty refutable when it is disengaged from his poetry. But it may still interest us as illustrating moods or tempers of philosophy. For philosophy as well as art has its *romanticism*, and also its anti-romanticism, which art knows as realism. At any rate there is idealism and there is empiricism, and the opposition of philosophical tempers which they exemplify; and there should

also be the classic health or harmony of these two tempers. Empedokles philosophises sometimes in the romantic mood, but very frequently in the mood of classicism, when he nobly indicates how inner and outer experience may be poised against each other in philosophical wellbeing.—But I must let these matters suggest themselves, while I am dealing with Empedokles the poet.

In one of his illuminating " Studies of the Greek Poets," John Addington Symonds remarked : " It may sound ridiculous to say so, yet Empedokles resembles Shelley in the quality of his imagination and in many of his utterances." Empedokles certainly does resemble Shelley, and especially " in the quality of his imagination." Why should it sound ridiculous to say so ? Simply because, I suppose, this " quality of imagination " in Shelley is what we call romantic ; and when Symonds wrote it was not thought right or convenient to call a Greek poet romantic. But of course a Greek poet, like any other poet, may have his moments of absorption in inner experience ; less usually, but just as certainly, a Greek poet may show a

complete phase of romanticism, when inner experience becomes for him the one genuine reality. This last, apparently, is what happened to Empedokles when he wrote his poem called *Purifications*, the fragments of which seem to indicate something like Shelley's vision of The World made Perfect in *Prometheus Unbound.*

It is even possible, that Empedokles should be regarded as the chief poetic representative of an early Romantic Movement: had we the whole of his work, he might seem, or one side of him might seem, something like the Lord Byron or Victor Hugo of that great movement of revolt against common sense and of celebration of imaginative fervor which—call it Pythagorism or Orphicism or Orientalism—swept over the Mediterranean world and left its mark wherever it went. At any rate, it is not difficult to recognise in Empedokles the romantic habit of life; he seems, in fact, to have lived in a series of romantic attitudes, or rather, perhaps, in a series of variations on one very familiar romantic attitude—the attitude of Melancholy Philanthropy. We seem to see a figure of majestic generosity

supporting incalculable grief. Moved by measureless desire of doing good to humanity, he is publicly consumed by remorse nothing can cure. A fierce democrat, his inhuman pride demands not merely respect, but reverence, and yet disdains to accept a crown. And in the midst of his pride, he shudders at himself. The recollection of some unspeakable guilt haunts him. He wears gold and purple, and descends from sublime speculation to champion the oppressed with the air of a god doing expiation. The man who has lookt through this world as through a pane of glass into the Light Beyond, is willing to labour as physician and engineer to an ant-heap. Multitudes hail him as their saviour in his progresses through Sicily, the feasting nobles salute him as a person more than human. But the sorrow of his face is not relaxt, his tragic gait is not lightened. In the midst of adoration, the mystery of his sadness clings about him, and keeps him isolated and alone. He would redeem the world, but himself is doomed. He is a god condemned to be a man. He loathes his punishment, yet longs to be good to the odious vermin that are with him in

the prison of this gross world. What wonder if popular feeling for the fitness of things made him end in the most romantic attitude of all—the famous dive into Ætna flames, and so through fire out of contaminating humanity back into the purity of his pristine divinity?

Really, it is not unlike Manfred—though Manfred, perhaps, as Schumann understood him; and magnified a hundred times in nobility and significance. And just a suspicion, perhaps, of mockery in that legendary final attitude of his—"heels in air the last of him"! It suggests ironical recognition of something like quackery in him, some resemblance to romantic vagabonds like Apollonius of Tyana and Paracelsus, whom, for all their brilliance and useful service, one cannot take quite seriously. And with them it does not much matter, for they had a sense of humour. There is no hint of it in Empedokles. Everything preposterous in him is seriously preposterous: and I notice that few who write about him find they can like him. A. W. Benn calls him a charlatan; Burnet a medicine-man; Gomperz talks of "tawdry and

showy tinsel." Symonds says he went through life "like a tragic actor." They cannot believe he is sincere. But an actor may be acting sincerely, even in real life; he may believe he is called on to play a part, an unusual part: and he plays it elaborately, with all his power. Everything in Empedokles, I believe, was sincere; though certainly to common sense much of it would seem more likely to be insincere. The real thing is, he was capable of out-and-out romanticism: sometimes continuously, sometimes by moments intervening among moods that might seem to discredit all romanticism. No healthy mind need like a romantic; but there is no need to excuse one's dislike by charging him with chicanery and tinsel.

He inherited, and sought to develop, two main lines of thought; and they were quite incompatible. Both were concerned with the same contrast of elementary states of being: that is, with the contrast between man in the state of *knowing himself*, and man in the state of *knowing his world*.[1] The separation of

[1] To distinguish them thus is, of course, to speak in a fashion familiar to our own habits of thought, and to use terms which

these two elementary states was inevitable for Empedokles; for long before him their discrimination had become necessary to thought; and it was to be very long before their discrimination could begin to seem once more unnecessary, and even vexatious.

These two states could not, however, be left in mere naked contrast, for then thought would break life in pieces: and obviously life is not in pieces. The problem for Empedokles, as for everyone else in his day, was, How to relate these contrasted states? Following one line of thought, the contrast might be reduced to an alliance, in which each element would supply the deficiencies of the other. But in a second line of thought, one of the elements might simply swallow up the other, and reduce the contrast by asserting its own immensely superior

Empedokles himself could hardly have used: but I do so in order to avoid burdening with allusions to the early history of Greek thought a discussion which is concerned not primarily with Empedokles' philosophy, but with the way his philosophy became poetry—with the way the science *which he inherited*, developed and contributed to the peculiar quality of his own imagination.

reality. Now when man knows the world, he knows *many* things; when he knows himself, he knows *one* thing. The contrast between inner and outer experience is the familiar contrast between the One and the Many, between a unifying coherent conception of things, effected by his reasoning imagination, and a dispersed and miscellaneous perception of things, the chance-medley of his senses. One line of thought, which Empedokles inherited from the mighty Herakleitos, sought to make inner and outer experience the two halves of an equation. Mind does not give reality because it can explain experience, nor does sense give reality because it is the substance of experience: reality is the balance and equivalence of the two, of the explanation and the substance, of unifying mind and multitudinous sense, of inner and outer.[1]

[1] Thus, with Herakleitos, the world is *one* (as the mind conceives it) but is also perpetual *change* (as sense perceives it)—i.e. the Many is thought as One flux of Becoming. Empedokles did not accept this; the subtle and fiery *oneness* of Herakleitean Becoming did not, apparently, satisfy his unifying desire like the rigid and icy Being of Parmenides. But *that* would not agree with his acute sense of the actual world. His theory may have

Reality, that is, is the whole fact of life, both conceiving and perceiving, when the two are perfectly poised against each other. That is the line of thought which was mainly, but not exclusively, pursued by Empedokles in his poem *Concerning the Nature of Things*. It is the thought characteristic of classicism, whether it be the classicism of philosophy or of art. It is the same harmony, the same equipoise, the same *health* or even reliance on life as a whole, which we find in the art of Sophokles and Shakespeare.

It is evident that here the two elements of inner and outer experience will justly limit each other. But there is that other line of thought, which descended to Empedokles from Pythagoras, and, by a very different route, from that admirable enigma, Parmenides. This is the line Empedokles followed

been designed, as Zeller thought, to be a mediating substitute for absolute Being and absolute Becoming. But, though he declined the Herakleitean solution, he nevertheless seems to me, when he follows the main line of thought for which his theory was clearly invented, to be philosophising in the Herakleitean direction—i.e. towards classicism, towards a balance of the inner unity and the outer multitude of experience.

with such passion in the *Purifications.* And here we see imagination declining to allow itself to be limited by the merely external, and, it is now felt, irrelevant necessities of the senses. And why ? Because inner experience—the unifying experience of life as reasoning imagination—now claims to be reality : one element of life claims to be more real than life as a whole ; what the mind conceives no longer merely *explains* what the senses perceive, it asserts a right to abrogate the senses' claim to any real existence at all. The One no longer balances the Many : the One completely overrides—nay, abolishes—the Many : or would abolish the Many if it could. Man experiencing the world is swallowed up and digested by man experiencing himself. Life most truly and absolutely *is*, when it exists wholly as the image of what life most profoundly and vividly desires to be.

This line of thought is romanticism ; it is always liable to emerge in Empedokles, but I propose to exhibit it in his poem called *Purifications*, which is wholly devoted to it. And, as I have said, I choose this poem of Empedokles not only because it

forestalls the quality of thought we associate with *Alastor* and *Prometheus Unbound*, but also because, Empedokles being a poet avowedly concerned with a theory of being, he gives us romanticism in a very primitive and general form. He annexes the whole world to his own inner experience ; he transfigures the whole scheme of existence into a mode of his own being. And this, for him, because of his belief in the validity of his own imagination, is an anticipation of the way the divine reality will at last perfect itself by absolutely becoming divine appearance—that is, by annihilating the world we think we know, and triumphing before us in its stead.[1] There will

[1] This is where the romantic *poet* (e.g. Empedokles) beats the romantic *philosopher* (e.g. Parmenides). Parmenides simply asserts that his imagined single Being absolutely *is*, and that sense and conventional thought merely delude us into supposing motion and change and variety. But he does not suggest that we can ever experience his absolute Being except by entering intellectually into it by way of his philosophy. But the poet Empedokles believes so completely in the reality demonstrated by his imagination, that he believes it is destined to appear before our very eyes, as ordinary fact : it will eventually be experience *given* to us by our normal existence, not merely experience attained to by intellectual effort.

then be no question of appearance and reality; there will simply be, unmistakably known, the World made Perfect—the world, namely, that is the perfect image of what the poet vehemently desires.

§ 2

Empedokles put his theory of the world in a symbolic notation which has had incalculable influence, and still lives in popular speech. It could be used, and often was used by him, simply as a scientific hypothesis—as the mind's unifying explanation of the infinite things thronging into sense. But it was of such a nature that it also could, and often did (even in *On the Nature of Things*), slip insensibly into a purely imaginative use; and instead of being an explanation or mental equivalent of things physically known, it could assume the prophetic tone of a self-sufficient and privileged illumination, entirely dispensing with and abrogating things physically known, and substituting itself for them. This is what we shall now consider, for this is the vein of the poem called *Purifications*.

The world, Empedokles supposes, consists of the four elements, earth, air, fire and water, subject to the opposed and simultaneous rule of Love and Strife. Strife, we shall easily understand, is the tendency of the world to disintegrate—to become *many* things: that is, the tendency towards individual existence.[1] It anticipates Herbert Spencer's principle of evolution: but had itself been anticipated by Anaximander, who thought individuality a sort of apostacy from absolute being: and perhaps by Herakleitos when he asserted war to be a necessity of existence. It certainly is a necessity of individual existence; the individual must war against the general, in order to create and maintain his peculiarity. And he must therefore, according to Empedokles, war against Love; for Love, whether or no it anticipates, as some have thought, chemical affinity or molecular cohesion, is certainly the force which holds existence together and keeps it

[1] This is but one aspect of "Strife" in Empedokles' whole philosophy, or complex of philosophies. More generally, Strife, by separating the elements, effects decay and death, as Love effects generation and harmony by joining them.

essentially *one* : not the mere inertia of the absolute against which differentiating, individualising Strife must work, but the active force which would, were Strife removed, restore this heterogeneous world back again to the perfect homogeneous unity of absolute being. If Strife reminds us of Spencer's evolution going forward, Love is very like Spencerian evolution going backward. Imagine Love ruling supreme and unopposed: there would no longer be a world of many parts, but the Being which Empedokles indicated in a passage of *On the Nature of Things*, clearly suggesting the audacious speculation of the *Purifications* :

> Then is not to be hailed aught of the sun's
> Blazing glory ; there is no shaggy strength
> Of earth, there is no sea. But now is stablisht,
> In a dense secrecy of harmony,
> Perfection like a Sphere, a finisht Round,
> Rejoicing in its circular solitude.

This, then, is Love supreme. The Many have passed altogether into the One ; private individuality is no more ; variety of shape has been absorbed by the Perfect Shape. Love has ended Strife's sin

of apostacy against the absolute; there are no more creatures, there is simply Being.—Yes! Imagine it! No more struggle for existence, no more of the bitter sorrow and anguish of individual life: nothing but the Sphere of Perfect Being. Must it not be also the Sphere of Perfect Bliss?—And where shall Love begin to be supreme? Where but in the mind which can imagine Love's supremacy,—in that inner experience where the One is conceived to exist, where the multitude of *outer* sense-experience is reduced to unity? So then it is this *inner* experience which knows of the absolute reality by conceiving it as One, not the outer experience which can only perceive it as Many! Let but Love be supreme in the mind: and life, the world, the whole possibility of existence, will here begin its *perfection*. (But *how* perfection can *begin*, we must not ask a romantic.)—And by a *natural* and attractive loosening of philosophical cogency, the romantic mind goes on to imagine *itself* enjoying the absolute bliss of the Perfect Sphere. Strife is *ended*; but the work of strife, individual *consciousness*, must somehow remain

to enjoy the triumph of Love, its obliterating solvent. However, to the romantic, all things are possible with Love; and indeed he is most typically a romantic when he follows up the logic of his convictions just as far as he *wants* to follow them, and no further.[1]

[1] That our world is to be annihilated in the interests of Perfection is an idea which may well strike poetic fire out of philosophic speculation; but about Perfection itself it allows nothing intelligible or imaginable to be said. When, therefore (in the *Purifications*), Empedokles wisht to write about Perfection, he was bound to compromise with this idea.—Many centuries afterwards, Perfection was again conceived as annihilation of the world. For the Manichees, the existence of the world was an evil, because it existed by mixture of the Light and the Dark, which ought to be separate. The purpose of Manichean religion was to restore their ancient separation; when the world would no longer exist. Neither, of course, would man, who is of the world, and a similar mixture of Light and Dark. If the elect Manichees wisht to speak of the coming Perfection in intelligible terms, or to imagine themselves enjoying it, they could only do so by compromising with the central idea of their religion. They must somehow think of themselves as men carried over into conditions which should make the existence of men unthinkable. Just so did Empedokles: how, we shall see in the *Purifications*; it is chiefly by putting Perfection, for the purposes of poetry, not quite so high as philosophy required: but also by making it more malleable.

Here, then, emerges one of the great romantic themes : Life Perfectible through Love. And clearly it is closely akin to another famous theme of romanticism—the mystical theme of individual mind through love knowing and entering into God. For it is not difficult to see, in the *Purifications*, the peculiar bias of the poet's personality, which was ready to take such notable advantage of the theory his philosophising mind had invented. The most conspicuous fact he knew of was the fact of his own genius. This was very natural. He lookt out on the multitudinous welter of things in the world, and felt, above every other motive that could possibly sway him, the passion and the duty to understand apparent confusion and miscellany as real order and coherent organism. He lookt into his own mind, and behold ! it was there : a mighty conception of things had mastered and unified the bewildered swarming of the world. What was responsible for this ? What was the power that had made his mind the equal of all the powers of the world ? There was no mistaking the answer : it was his genius that had so marvellously enabled

him. How came he to have in him so potent a genius, able to take up all the jarring discords of the world into the resolution of one sublime harmony? Must it not be something divine in him, this genius of his: a dæmon, a spirit descended from God?—And yet it is here on earth, this divine spirit, incarnate in the abhorred torment of the world! How account for this, how justify it? What wonder if he concludes, "There is some mystery of guilt upon me; I have committed some nameless and hideous sin; and I am being punisht for it."—Yet there must be a purpose in all this! Can he not redeem himself? Love gives him the secret; love reveals to him the divinity he has lost, and must aspire to resume; with love he enters into the will of God. He must redeem himself by redeeming mankind. He has been sent into the world capable of conceiving a better world; he must teach men how to take possession of this; he is one of those to whom has been entrusted, as a personal expiation, the perfecting of earthly life. By teaching men the rule of love, he becomes himself a mode of love, and knows how to be once more divine;

nay, once more possesses divinity, even in the midst of this world. He can enter into God by contemplation; but if, by harbouring such a spirit as his, earthly life has been shown the way to *its* perfection, he must nevertheless leave earthly life behind, when the appointed time comes for him to resume *his* perfection. It will be seen that the doctrine of Love is, in the *Purifications*, a much more human and seizable, and also much less logical, affair than the metaphysic of *On the Nature of Things*. Instead of the indescribable perfection of existence itself in the absolute unity of the Sphere, we are shown a perfection which consists of human nature reformed and a god restored: instead of intellectual ardor we have cordial passion. Roughly, in fact, we may say—though the essential ideas remain the same—that philosophy gives way to poetry.

The poem which, in the interests of our main topic, I have thus somewhat disproportionately introduced, has come down to us as a chance collection of fragments; and a good part of it is usually tumbled into print as an unintelligible disorder. A little attention to the poetic connexion

of the pieces will soon reveal, however, a continuous process of imagination. There are gaps in the connexion which no arrangement can avoid; but they are not impassable. The translation which follows attempts to reconstruct the original design (but not, of course, the bulk) of the poem: first, by taking the fragments in the order their matter seems to recommend; secondly, by interpolating in brackets not only comments, but suggestions of what we have lost, sometimes versified in order to minimise the interruption. Though the translation is certainly pretty free, I do not think it takes altogether unwarrantable liberties with its original; but I have not hesitated to expand Empedokles' phrases in order to give something like an English equivalent to his Greek. A version, however, which often takes many words to bring out the effect of a single phrase, evidently must not offer itself as an equivalent in art.[1]

[1] In order to be quite frank about the fault this version deliberately commits—the fault of expanding and analyzing Empedokles' thought as I translate it—as well as to show the arrangement adopted, I have put in the margin the numeration of the lines in Stein's edition, which is also that which

§ 3

The Purification of Man and his World

Argument. How a Divine Life (a Dæmon) descended into human life, suffered the agony of incarnation there, but redeemed himself by purifying the world wherein he was incarnate, and thence reascended.

(*Exordium : " You, my friends, know what I appear : what I am in truth I am now at last to explain.*")[1]

352–368 O friends, who dwell in golden Acragas,
Anxious for good, and inexpert in evil,
I greet you, I, an immortal god at last,
No longer held down by the death called flesh.

Fairbanks follows. I do not believe Empedokles can be made intelligible in English, except in a version in some degree analytic: not only habits of language, but habits of thought, require it. If this has given me the Empedokles I want, it is at most by means of legitimate emphasis ; not, I am convinced, by means of any distortion of his meaning. I do not think I have used any undue emphasis ; but, as I have translated him for the purpose of elucidating an argument, some emphasis has quite possibly insinuated itself.

[1] Interpolated lines are printed in square brackets.

Walking the world in all men's reverence
(As is most right), and crowned with platted flowers,
I come to prosperous cities ; and at once
They pour the thousands of their throngs about me,
Worshipping men and women, following me
To learn my straight way to the certain good :
Whether they ask for heavenly truth, or cures
For that disease, their life : long it has been
Since agony first nailed man to the earth !
Nothing they can desire, but I can lend
Counsel like sharpen'd steel to shape it right.—
Yet on these things what need have I to lean
As though for me they were great things ? What need,
If I be better than man's perishing tribe ? . . .
[But, for all this, they doubt me, what I am.
They dare not think one of the holy spirits
Speaks to them, looks at them, when I move among
them.]
O friends, I know, I know when I speak truth !
But troublesome it is to let faith in,
Jealousy watches at the gates of the mind.

. . . . . .

(He is a Dæmon ; the life in him is a divine life. Yet he is here on earth, a man among men. How is this ?—The Dæmon's agonised incarnation.)

369 Necessity hath said it ; and the gods
Have publisht it in an antique decree,
Sealed right across with their immortal oaths :
When there hath foul'd his limbs with bloody guilt,

Or for sin's sake forsworn himself, a Life
Divine, one of those Spirits whose being is
Immeasurably lasting—then in his guilt
For thrice ten thousand seasons he shall wander
Far from those Blessed Ones ; and all the while
Incessantly being born in every form
Of dying, taking in abhorred exchange
One of Life's wretched courses after another.
For from its purity the mighty air
Chases him down to the sea, and the loathing sea
Spits him out on the threshold of the earth,
And the earth throws him to the blazing sun ;
Thence back again into the whirl of air.
So one from another takes him, all detest him.
Now such an one am I, a wanderer
In flight from the gods, damned into worldly being,
382 To keeping of frenzied Strife handed over.
383 For I have been ere this a boy, a girl,
385
This world my doom—the strange detestable place
Full of Murder and Hatred and the tribes
Of all Misfortune, parching maladies,
387
389
390 hat height
Of unbelievable bliss, thus am I now
391 Fallen on earth, to live with dying flesh !
[Yea, Justice for these sinning spirits hath
A fearful vengeance, changing them to men,]

404 Taking them from their proper lives and fastening
About their souls the imagery of death !
[Thus into fortune one with man's we creep ;]
392 Down we must go into this world, beneath
The menacing roof of this cavern of a world ;
[This world where naught prevails, where Good and Bad
Are beasts pitted to fight with equal strength,
Where naught exists but by its opposite :]
393 A world of heavy Earth and Sunfire piercing,
Murdering Strife and modest Harmony,
Beauty and Ugliness, Hurry and Loitering,
Lovely Truth and Uncertainty foggy-sighted,
Growth and Perishing, Slumber and Awaking,
Light Stir and Steadfastness, Majesty crown'd
399 And filthy Rubbish, Silence and heavenly Voice.

(This is the real ground of the incarnate Dæmon's agony : that, formed to inhabit the bliss of Pure Being, he is immersed in a world whose being consists in the Strife of Opposite Natures. And the climax and epitome of worldly being, of strife, is the being of Man. It is while he is man that the Dæmon's agony is at its height (though it is also while he is man that he can proclaim and perhaps effect the eventual purification of the world, i.e. its substitution of Love for Strife as ruling principle).

Accordingly, from describing generally the World of Opposites, the poem proceeds to elaborate the wretchedness of Man. But only a few pregnant phrases remain of this portion; here pieced together, with some expansion of the broken meaning to suggest the trend of the passage.)

400 Woe for you, O ye miserable race,
O utterly unblest, death's property,
401 How are ye made all of strife and lamenting!—
402 Wrapt in a dress of gleaming flesh, they roam,
388 *Infatuate* phosphorescence, in the fate
Of darkness that is on them, up and *down*
388, 403 This meadow of delusion, man-folding earth.

(The poem now enters on the second half of its great theme, complementary to what has gone before.—There is hope for man's misery; for one who now lives with men is found to have *more than* human ability, and in the midst of delusion to know truth. His doctrine will prove to be man's redemption from strife; and as his doctrine becomes realised in the conduct of men, he himself will be emancipated from the world; for this man is a Dæmon thus working out his expiation. This latter part of the poem is, unfortunately, even more

fragmentary than the rest. It seemed convenient to interpolate, after the lines which now focus our attention on *the Man* (i.e. Empedokles himself), a versified paragraph or two, simply in order to take the reader across what must be a considerable gap, and to give him some sort of passage to the concluding strain, in which we find *the Man*, the incarnate Dæmon, exhorting and prophesying.)

But among these was notable a man
Who knew unusual things ; yea, in his mind
Most precious treasure was laid up, which he
Delighted to make common coin for men.
Such an one was he that, when he reacht out
With his main mind, easily he drew forth
Out of the vast of Everything the sight
Of each thing as it is : the truth he knew
Ten or a score ages of common men
Might scarce attain. [He could not bear to live
Among the rambling folly, the blinded woe,
Of men, while his mind knew to drive a way
Straight through this frantic world to peace and good ;
He could not leave in its gross flourishing
The heartless rash unreason of their lives,
While in the secrets of his being lay
Essential doctrine that, like remedy
Cooling a frantic fit, could give pleased health.
He stood in front of the hateful strife of men,

And spoke his secret out: and in that music
The wrangle of their minds, like a charm'd line
That settles trembling into written sound,
Thrill'd into living pattern of his thought.
   Be ruled by me, he said; belong no more
To misery and destruction; but to love
Wholly belong, and to love's kindliness.
Love is the truth of being; but the world
Your lives accept is infamous fraud and murder.
Will you be still content, to be paid back
With usury of anguish for the wealth
Of wrong you put so lavishly forth in the world ?]
425-427 There is an ordinance for everything,
Impartial, no exception; none may say
" This is for others : me it touches not " :
Province as wide and flawless as the reign
Of air, or undimensional glory of light.
[Life shall love life. But you, what have you done
But torture life, what have you loved but death ?]
428, 429 Will you not cease from murder ? Can you not see,
You heedless things, how you devour each other ?
430 The sacrificing father slays his son,
With foolish saying of prayers : the shape is changed
But 'tis the selfsame life as that he loved :
The life we have seen haled along beseeching
How often mercy of the pious slaughterer !
And he will hear naught of the piteous clamour,
But takes his knife : and the foul feast is set
There, in the victim's home. Or 'tis the son
That on his father, and daughters on their mother,
Seize, and smite out the life and make their banquet

435, 445 Of the beloved flesh. You do these things,
And out of them comes frenzy, and loathsome grief
Most righteously to cling hard on your souls,
446 And the disease you will not shed away.
[For you are all one life : the ordinance
Of love upon the many modes of life,
Makes them not many lives, but one life only.
Slaughter a living thing, and life itself
Is filthy with the blood ; the injury
Shudders in every nerve that lives on earth.
And as for me, do I not know your sin ?
Has not my soul devoured your horrible deeds ?
I am the life you injure, and I have been
Man, the injurious, the defiler.] Alas !
436 No merciless day blotted my being out
437 Before I feasted on your wickedness !

(Here, it seems, should follow the actual *purifications;* the prophet prescribes certain ceremonial remedies for the life of the world. Some obscure fragments remain [440–443], so abrupt that they can only seem to us hopelessly arbitrary and irrelevant. They belong to the thaumaturgy of the time, and scarcely concern us.—Laurels are to be avoided (they are poisonous, they are hostile to life). There comes in somehow the Pythagorean mystery (as good, perhaps, as any other) of the Danger of Beans. Lustration

requires clean brass and pure water, and respect for the Pythagorean virtue of numbers (*five* springs are to be mingled).—Such thëurgy is local and temporary, but the core of it all is real enough, and the phrase which gives it could perhaps, for Empedokles, still carry a certain irony in its metaphor: "Fast from evil!" [444]—That is the law these ceremonies indicate; and their immediate purpose is to purify man from the guilt of blood and the rule of Strife, and prepare him for the rule of Love.—As for the guilt of Empedokles himself, the poem as we have it does not make that quite clear. He certainly is defiled by and must suffer for man's blood-guiltiness. It may be that this is itself the mysterious sin mentioned in the earlier portions of the poem, for which he must suffer everything the whole revolution of living can inflict. He was, perhaps, a divine spirit visiting the world of men, who allowed himself to become partaker of man's sin: he shed blood and ate flesh; and thereby found himself doomed to become man indeed, outcast from the life of the gods till he has workt out his redemption by *purifying* his incarna-

tion and making it acceptable to the gods. Or it may be that he had already sinned in the region of the divine life, and was sent to penal exile among men, the necessary result of incurring their defilement being part of his punishment.—In any case, he knows of purifications which can make man's life perfect in the sight of the gods—that is, everything the poet desires it to be. Now that the perfecting doctrine is announced, man's life is at the parting of the ways. Those who reject the doctrine become mere lives of ravin and poison.)

438, 439 They are among the beasts, the houseless lions
That hunger upon the mountains; or they stand
Senseless among the trees, the poisonous life
Of laurels in the midst of pleasant foliage.

(But to accept the doctrine is to enter into the World Made Perfect. The life which hitherto could only exist in the poet's idealising imagination comes into actual and practical existence; imagination can now give shape to the desire for perfection in life by actually and practically giving man a new world. It is a world which turns from the gods who favor Strife and orders itself wholly into worship of

Love alone: Love the divine queen [Κύπρις βασίλεια] rules the perfect life, and her rule is the "ordinance for everything" [τὸ πάντων νόμιμον] which makes all life one harmony.—The poet passes into the future, looking back on this new world as something already achieved.)

405 Not for them were there gods in War and Tumult;
Zeus was no king, nor Kronos nor Poseidon;
But only Love was queen. Her they adored
With worship made of beauty and delight:
Carven and painted imagery, the air
A throng of cunning odours, myrrh and gums
Cast sacring on the altars, and on the ground
Before them sweetness of the yellow honey.
But these were altars the thick blood of bulls
Might never moisten; an abomination
Not to be spoken of, to smite the life
Out of the lovely limbs that life has used,
414, 421 And feed upon their death! For all with men
Were fellows; all the people of the world,
The ground and the air of it, the beasts and birds,
Were friendly: all were sparkles of one flame,
The kindliness of love. Nay, and the trees
Flourisht perpetual in leaves and fruit
To please their comrade with a lasting season,
424 Lavishing all he loved in them at once.

(And what of those who have created this world for man—the healers, the makers of peace and harmony, the imaginers of the new world, the redeemers of man—the Dæmons incarnate in this life, who have inspired life with their divinity—the spirits of whom Empedokles is the type?—As the world of men perfects itself in their ministrations, they ascend to their ancient dignity. With a vision of *their* perfection (i.e. restoration to supernal bliss) the poem concludes.)

> Thus as they make man's life in its kind perfect
> They grow to their perfection: they are the prophets,
> They know the praise of the gods, they minister healing,
> They are the lords that deal with earthly life;
> And out of this their growth is into gods
> And the honors of gods: they sit with the immortals
> And share the feasts of heaven; grief of man
> Touches them not; earth has no power on them,
> There is no harm for them in death and decay.

§ 4

Two main notions, I think, stand out pretty clearly in the composition of that remarkable poem: the notion of Personal Genius, with its privileges

and powers, and the notion of Perfectible Life, with its consolation for existing miseries. They are quite distinct, yet closely related; and from them and their relation proceed two capital varieties of romanticism, two ways of taking romanticism to an uncompromising extreme. They have already been mentioned; and both of these fundamental forms of romanticism are clearly to be discerned in the *Purifications.* It should be noted, however, that neither the sense of Personal Genius, nor the idea of Perfectible Life, *need* be romantic. Both, of course, belong to inner experience, but both are quite capable of entering into an equilibrium with outer experience. The keenest sense of Personal Genius may be very well aware of, and may frankly accommodate itself to, the conditions exacted by the outer things which, willy-nilly, are *given* in this world. And the idea of Perfectible Life need be no more than an idea: life perfectible merely in the idea of it, poised against, but assuming no pretension over, the actually imperfect life which, after all, has the advantage of physical existence. But in the *Purifications* both these notions have become

romantic; and Empedokles shows us what has happened: the counterpoise of appropriate outer experience has been removed. And this is just what happens in any other poet, when these notions, or any other notions, become romantic.

The two capital varieties of romanticism are usually quite distinguishable; and they do not often associate, as they do in Empedokles. There is, in the first place, Mysticism.—"I fear that Wordsworth loves nature," said Blake, "and nature is the work of the devil." Well, that leaves us in no doubt as to which side of experience Blake himself relied on. Neither does this: "I assert for myself that I do not behold the outward creation, and that to me it is hindrance and not action. 'What!' it will be questioned, 'when the sun rises, do you not see a round disc of fire, somewhat like a guinea?' Oh! no! no! I see an innumerable company of the heavenly host, crying Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty!—I question not my corporeal eye, any more than I would question a window concerning a sight. I look through it, and not with it."—And is not that the

very quintessence of romanticism—that uncontainable wonder and rapture, set off against commonplace matter-of-fact in the scornful satire of the "round disc of fire, somewhat like a guinea"? Yes: this romanticism lives wholly in the vision which imagination gives. Why? Blake gives the categorical answer: "vision or imagination is a representation of *what actually exists, really and unchangeably*."

This is the sublime of self-confidence; this is to believe wholly in one's inmost self—to live with perfect security in one's inmost experience. This is mysticism; and it is also a notable kind of romanticism. But the mystic has no need to despise and detest the knowledge of the five senses, and of the intellect that must busy itself with them: simply, he can dispense with all such knowledge. Mysticism is the life which professes direct intuition of the pure truth of being, wholly independent of the faculties by which it takes hold of the illusory contamination of this present world. It may disdainfully put by the impertinences of sense and reason, but as a rule it is not greatly perturbed by

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them: indeed, having been inscrutably sent down into their *region*, the mystic is, if need be, quite willing, and often very well able, to cope with them and play a practical part with them But they remain, for him, temporary contaminations; from which there is always escape into private perfection—into the bliss of *pure being*, by the internal faculty of the mystic's intuition. But this can only be *known*, to the mystic's own mortal consciousness as well as to his audience, in terms of earthly being—that is, in sensible images, in symbolic imagination. That is why imagination may claim to represent what *really* exists. It is the symbol of the mystic's absorption into *pure being*. And he certainly is absorbed into pure being: it is into the inmost purity of *his own* being—into an absoluteness of inner experience—that he is absorbed. But if I were asked, how this comes to be romantic, my answer would be, that it does not come to be romantic at all; this merely *is* romanticism (or one of its main modes): the presence of this self-sufficient imagination, utterly confident in its own symbolism, is the quality we call romanticism.

And for proof I can only point to Blake's pictures and poems. If they are not romantic, what is? And, most undeniably, they are characteristically the reliance on inner experience which I have just described. And so it is with Empedokles. Who tells him he holds within him the divine truth about existence? Who tells him his spirit is an outcast god? Who but *himself*?—And that is precisely why he believes what he is told without a shade of reserve.

§ 5

Empedokles certainly does detest and revile the world into which he is condemned; and some other mystics have been with him in this. Thus Avicenna speaks of his soul's exile into the world from the heaven of beauty and perfection very much as Empedokles speaks:

> Midst the [illegible] Lo, it was hurled
> [illegible]
> [illegible] its eyes without pausing or rest,
> And with plaintive mourning it broodeth like one bereft
> O'er such trace of its home as the fourfold winds have left.[1]

[1] So quoted by F Hadland Davis in his Introduction (p. 2) to *The Persian Mystics*, Vol. I, *Jaldlu'd-din Rumi* (Murray).

But this, in Empedokles, is the result of an unnatural alliance between mysticism and belief in life's eventual perfection: unnatural, because the two are really quite incompatible, though that is no reason in romanticism why they should not co-exist. They are two thoroughly divergent developments of one original tendency. Had Empedokles been simply a mystic, there would have been no need for him to say so many hard things of the world: but he contrasted it with what it ought to have been, very much as Shelley did. But there was nothing mystical about Shelley. His idea of Life Perfectible refers to the life of this present world. That is a matter of no great importance to the mystic; indeed, it is natural for him to assume that life in this world must always exhibit, as its peculiar property, imperfection: it is out of that property that the activity of mysticism arises. He has no need, and it would not become him, to rebel against this imperfection; it is no concern of his, to improve what has been ordained: while he is in the midst of it, he can privately withdraw, and immediately enter a more admirable life. It is a life which is evidently

on the way to perfection, which may often claim to have achieved perfection. But it is not the life of this world. What it is, he employs his imagination, to the best of its ability, to tell us. Shelley employed his imagination to quite another purpose. It is not merely to tell us what man's life *ought to be*; he is convinced that what *ought to be* exists in a manner so utterly superior to the existence of what merely *is*, that the latter is a mere bungling preparation for it, and is bound eventually to give place to the full and complete reality of things. The perfection he imagines is a perfection that is to occur openly to all men, here and now. He hates this world as it is—as his outer experience gives it him: hates it so, that he will not believe in it—in its permanence, at any rate. As it is, the life of this world is a continual offence against love; and love is what he believes in. But in the vision of *his inner* experience he can conceive of a world which is a continual celebration of love. This must be the world which will finally triumph! And so his imagination tells us, not of an inner reality into which one may withdraw from the imper-

fection which, nevertheless, must still go on existing, but of an inner reality which will at last replace and cancel the imperfections of outer experience. The world he imagines is to march out of its quarters, and annex and reorganise the world he knows.

And so it was with Empedokles. Both poets are exquisitely sensitive to what is wrong with the world; for both, it is a horror, that life should destroy life to live; both fiercely resent the imposition on their spirits of such ignoble conditions. But Shelley is also exquisitely sensitive to the beauty of this world. He cannot accept this world as a fit habitation for his spirit; but clearly it is not the enemy of the ideal simply by being real, but by being to so large an extent the wrong sort of reality. Why can it not all be as lovely as seas and stars and woods and mountains? And here comes in the romantic. Shelley thinks so little of the power of reality, that he believes man's *desire* can utterly master it and will at last transform it. He must believe this; for Shelley's type of romanticism must love, or look forward to loving, the existence

it belongs to. And it can only love the works of love. Shelley not merely longs for his own perfection; he cannot endure to think that imperfection anywhere should continue to exist. Accordingly he shows us, not only as desirable vision but as authentic prophesy, the World made Perfect in *Prometheus Unbound*: in a version of much more intricate beauty and much more aspiring ecstasy than Empedokles had attempted.

Shelley will always stand as the type of one form of romanticism; and *Prometheus Unbound* is an extreme instance of it; a step further in romanticism (though hardly in poetic art) than, for example, the merely desirable vision of perfection in personal happiness and personal love given by *Epipsychidion*. It is not a romanticism into which he has been driven; it is *a priori*, an original repugnance for the outer necessities of life in this world, for the gross embodiment enclosing a spirit longing for freedom. It was Shelley's nature to despise and loathe reality. He says of Lucretius—that sublime mind which had no need to jump out of the world in order to achieve sublimity—" Lucretius had limed

the wings of his swift spirit in the dregs of the sensible world." There he confesses himself. This sensible world is to him mere dregs of existence; the purity, the truth of being, lie elsewhere—*above* this world: in the region to which imagination has access. What these dregs of existence are like he tells us in *The Cenci* and *Julian and Maddalo*: the only poems of his which attempt to concern themselves in any noticeable degree with the present reality of things. Here is the world he would have man transform (not, as in the mystic's recommendation, abandon): and no wonder—a world which has no other use for beauty and candor and innocence than to torture and destroy them! Clearly, the world he "*knows*" is as romantic as the world that is to take its place: it is derived not from any real commerce with outer things, but simply from inner conviction. This is the color of his whole life: he knew the world by imagining it—he imagined the repulsive thing his imagination must transcend and abrogate! He accepts without question the story that Keats was murdered by the reviewers. Of course: that is what reviewers

are for; that is exactly what he can imagine. He accepts without question the persecution of Harriet Westbrook and of Emilia Viviani. Of course: they were beautiful and young—at any rate he found them attractive; what should such a world as this do but persecute such charming persons in it as these? Their story was familiar to him before he was told it: imagination had long since wearied him with it.—But they are attractive; and at once his imagination has found a further scope: it has made of them instances of the life he longs for, the life he can love at last. But we know what happened to Harriet; and as for Emilia, Shelley pretty soon confessed that she was "a cloud instead of a Juno." Clearer still is the famous affair of Elizabeth Hitchener. This learned *school-ma'am*, as long as he knew her merely by her letters, was simply a mind; and he endowed her with every noble and lovely quality he had ever dreamt a mind could have. His converse with her is a sort of intellectual love—far above what he calls "these detestable distinctions" of male and female. But when, on his importunity, she comes to share his household,

the next thing we hear of is his frantic manœuvring to get rid of her. She has become "the Brown Demon," or, more exactly, "an artful, superficial, ugly, hermaphroditical beast of a woman"; and his late passion for her he confesses to be, baldly, "bad taste." The wretched creature who was once superior to "these detestable distinctions" of sex is now reproacht with being "hermaphroditical!"—"I think," says Shelley (now referring to Emilia, once "spouse, sister, angel"), "one is always in love with something or other: the error . . . consists in seeking in a mortal image the likeness of what is, perhaps, eternal." This "error" inspired *Epipsychidion*, the most radiant of romantic love-poems! It was just the same with him as a reformer. He dearly wanted to be in love with man's life: that is to say, he dearly wanted it to be something he could be in love with. All his schemes of reform propounded his darling doctrine of Love the Redeemer. And, like his women, they failed him. But he still had one resource; there was still something he could love: the purity of his own imagination. There, like Empedokles, in this

misery of a world he could be secure: not because there he could forget the world, but because there he could at last safely be in love with the world. For there was the world that was to be. In *Prometheus Unbound* he proclaimed imagination that was no longer a protest against reality, but the beginning of a new reality.

§ 6

Relying on inner experience, one may desire to withdraw from the actualities of life; relying on inner experience, one may desire to improve the actualities of life. The extreme elaborations of these two main motives diverge into mysticism, and into belief in the actual world's eventual perfection. I will not argue that all romanticism can be reduced to these two types; though I believe that, in the great majority of cases, they would give us convenient headings for classification. But at any rate, Blake and Shelley, in whom I have instanced these two types of transcendent desire, are also typical romantics; and however divergent

and, indeed, (properly understood) incompatible their main characteristics may be, both derive them from a common origin. And to this we are unmistakably pointed when we find that a more primitive stage of derivation allows the characteristics of both naively to co-exist: as they do in Empedokles. Although, then, we need not accept these two types of mind as the two specific kinds of romanticism, they may yet show us, by their typical derivation, how to understand the same common origin for all romanticism: all, whatever its kind or degree, derives from some mode of reliance on inner experience, as an affair somehow superior to outer experience.

You may say that to make division of the two experiences is itself a thoroughly romantic act: the division does not belong to experience as it is in truth, which cannot exist without uniting both parties—the mind and the world; it can only belong to the gloss with which mind accompanies its own experience. The objection seems to postulate the very thing it objects to: the possibility of inner experience. But in any case what we have

to discover is not the cool reason of an absolute metaphysic, but the prejudice, right or wrong, which makes the activity of romanticism possible. That must be a prejudice capable of taking an infinite variety of forms. And if it is simply a prejudice in favor of inner experience, it is so capable. Something of the range of its possible variety has already been indicated; and more opens out as we follow up its working. Resemblance and difference keep company whichever way we go: the resemblances and the differences which make up the whole infinitely complex fact of romanticism. Thus, Empedokles resembles Shelley in hatred of blood-shed and belief in the power of love. But just as strongly he reminds us also of a still later assertion of life's perfectibility, very unlike Shelley's; in his prophecy of a select race of privileged super-human beings, who are at last to justify human existence by emerging from it and working their superb will on it, without whose emergence man's life would be nothing but a disgusting farce: here Empedokles reminds us of Nietzsche, for whom neither blood-shed nor love was of first-rate

importance. Empedokles again, like Nietzsche, believed quite naively and uncontrollably in his own genius: for Empedokles it was a "dæmon," for Nietzsche a "fatality." Yet Empedokles and Nietzsche are unlike just where they resemble each other: the "fatality" belongs to the course of nature, the "dæmon" comes from beyond nature. And again, unlike the redeemers foretold by Empedokles, Nietzsche's Overman looks for no divine rewards; his triumph will be his achievement, in the world of here and now; he is but another version of Shelley's self-rewarded vision of the life of this world on the way to its perfection. Is Nietzsche therefore to be accounted for as a sort of blend of Empedokles and Shelley?—But look at that other and equally important range of relationships brought in by the openly defiant romanticism of Nietzsche's appeal to Dionysus—the divine intoxication of inner experience, the liberator of the life within, bidding us transcend in spiritual rapture the husk of this outer life: an appeal sometimes, it must be admitted, made merely to the holy name which, like an abracadabra, he had only to murmur in order to

feel all his difficulties resolved. That, however, is romanticism of another color. But we do not need his hatred of Euripides to remind us how closely in fact Nietzsche is related to the inspiration of *The Bacchæ*—the gay, terrible, insouciant repudiation by life's elemental energy of the decencies the serene Apollo has imposed on life ; nor to remind us at the same time of the gulf between his Zarathustra and the innumerable romanticisms which, besides the splendor of *The Bacchæ*, Hellas owes to Dionysus. We do not need his hatred of Christianity to remind us how closely in fact his adored symbol of the secret energies relates him to the *Fioretti*, and all other religious fervors, even those of drum and brass band, which revolt against settled decorum of belief—relates him also, willy-nilly, to popular emotion resenting aristocratic culture ; nor, again, to remind us of the gulf between him, the man who romantically could not bear the primary facts of life (that is to say, *men*), and the universal levelling of other religious romanticisms. Difference still accompanies resemblance. Who could have expected that Nietzsche's Dionysus is to

may contain. What has just been said of him by no means exhausts them; and it is to him I shall return, rather than to Empedokles, for an instance of still another of the spirits of romanticism—namely, *pessimism*

THIRD LECTURE

§ 1

IT will have been noticed that, having asserted the danger and impropriety of setting up an antithesis between classicism and romanticism, I have nevertheless several times assumed the possibility of contrasting them. But this is not to imply antithesis—not, at least, the strict antithesis of mutually exclusive elements, such as may be found in the contrast between romanticism and realism. For, let me repeat, classicism and romanticism are not opposites: between the two there is no opposition at all, except such as may be foisted in by the passing and wholly unimportant eagerness of partisans. Classicism includes the element of romanticism. How can there be classicism without inner experience? And it may be as vivid and individual as you please, and yet not endanger the existence of classicism. No romantic imagination is likely to adventure further than Dante's or Milton's; no [illegible] feelin[illegible] likely to have more

force than Shakespeare's. It is when inner experience assumes the first importance, still more when it assumes the only importance, in the composite fact of life, that romanticism appears. Indeed, for a general proposition, romanticism can hardly be defined more precisely than a *tendency* to rely on inner experience: though, to make the tendency clear, I have so far given you extreme cases of it. The difference between classicism and romanticism is simply a question of balance: and between equipoise and kicking the beam there are infinite degrees, as there is an infinite range of things to provide matter for the variable balancing of inner and outer experience.

The possibility of romanticism may be included in classicism in two ways. In the first place, it may be very much as the properties of a chemical element are included and digested in the wholly new properties of a compound: in which case we can only detect the romantic element by analysis, and may only say that it would be romantic if it were isolated from the rest. The instance I would allege here is Sophokles. Whatever there is in his art is absolutely

compounded with the rest, and merges its properties in the whole. But think, for example, of the opening of the *Ajax* : have we not there, in Odysseus' rapture into supernatural experience, into visionary assurance of the truth of the imagined divinity in things, the possibility of romantic vision ?—the thrilling vision (as Blake would put it) of " what actually exists, really and unchangeably," behind the common life of this world, which vapors in the gleam of it *like a phantom and a shadow.*

But it may also be that streaks or layers of an evident and distinctly emphasised romanticism may be separated by mere inspection out of a substance the complete mixture of which, at large and as a whole, is classicism. The obvious instance here is Shakespeare. In any case, it will often help us to discern what it is that makes a topic romantic, if we compare it with the state of a similar topic in classicism ; for romanticism is not to be known by its topics : there is no topic of romanticism which may not be a topic of classicism. How often, for example, have the advocates of the romantics pleaded in their favor the Return to Nature ? Not

more often, and not more justly, as Professor Robertson has pointed out,[1] than the other side has entered precisely the same plea. It is true that jurisprudence gains nothing by these cries and counter-cries, until it knows what " nature " means. And " nature " may mean so many things! Men may return to " nature " in quite opposite directions. " Nature " to *one may be the mere miscellany of* objects among which life must take its chance; to another it may be the ideal harmony and symmetry of a life we would possess if we could. But let " nature " have a meaning quite popular and at the same time fairly definite: let nature be simply the country against the town—birds, beasts and flowers, mountains, clouds and waters, in contrast with the works of man—or with some of his works: for " nature " does not exclude the farmer, though it does exclude the banker, who perhaps owns the farmer, and may very well be his next-door neighbour.

What makes this *nature—the affairs of the* country-side—romantic? For assuredly it is a

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topic which classicism may just as well take up. There is nothing inherently romantic in the contemplation of cows and butterflies, hills and streams. But that contemplation may easily become romantic, and we have already noted a typical case of it in Campbell's regard for views, and the way it insists on the importance of *distance*. We feel at once that something similarly valued is insisted on whenever nature takes on a romantic air: wildness, melancholy, loneliness, remoteness, majesty, awe, idyllic happiness, Arcadian innocence. How often, for example, has romanticism declared for *sublimity !*—a word, no doubt, of somewhat dubious aspect, but, when the romantics are concerned with it, looking pretty steadily at the meaning Burke turned it towards. Indeed, Burke's doctrine of the sublime is an unmistakable fingerpost to the Romantic Movement in general, and especially to the typical instance of Campbell's sentiment for *distance*.' For Burke's sublimity is a species of obscurity, the appearance of things that *cannot* be clear. And it is this very obscurity that makes sublimity desirable; since clearness "is in some sort

an enemy to all enthusiasms."—Yes! Enthusiasm; that is what is desired: the inner life surging into its freedom, stimulated but not controlled or bounded by reality—the reality imposed by the life without. "A clear idea is another name for a little idea." And why? Because the inner life is the *great* life, the life capable of any expansion; and it can fully assert itself only as reality *recedes*—into sublimity! To enter into a clear idea is to enter into precise delineation. But in the sublime the idea or appearance of things loses its power of moulding the action of the mind; imagination finds itself able to expand indefinitely; the inner life, moved by a sense of the transcendent to the depths of consciousness, yearns to conceive unknowable infinity: and nothing can stir us to that "whilst we are able to perceive its bounds." This enthusiasm in fact, this yearning towards infinity, which is the essence of Burke's sublime, is nothing but inner experience eagerly taking the opportunity of substituting itself for an outer experience which has proved incomprehensible. There can be no doubt, I think, that Burke's *doctrine* of the sublime,

especially when nature is the topic, is an exact type of what romanticism always has been. Hundreds of years before Burke or Campbell, nature could be romantic in just this fashion ; for it is nowhere more romantic than in Old English poetry, and romantic just because it is, in Burke's sense, sublime—misty, shadowy, stormy, unseizable and shapeless.

The instance of Old English poetry may remind us also, how very welcome to this department of romantic feeling the works of man may be, when they are deserted and decaying : *ruins* have been part of romantic nature, from the nameless author of the noble Old English elegy down to Beckford and the hare-brained romantics who built private ruins in their parks. Musing over ruins goes along with the mysterious charm of moonlight, or with Byron's melancholy pleasure in being alone among the sounds and spaces of the seashore, or with Shelley's translation of snow-capt mountains into a notional redemption from a notional wrong. The thing common to all these experiences is that they are valued for their power of stimulating and echoing the life within : in " nature " the romantic poet

sees and feels *himself* beautifully displayed—his desires and aspirations, his joys and his griefs. "Nature" is nothing but a symbolic development of his own individual life, and valued just because it is that. He looks abroad, and still finds himself the important thing.

But what is the value of nature to Wordsworth? When the cataract haunted him like a passion, it was not this sort of passion. Certainly it was personal; it was passion well aware of itself—indeed, a white heat of conscious exultation in his own powers. But not because, in the failure of his senses to take in what transcended their ability, his inner powers were driven to assert their peculiar greatness, on their own account, and to strive to imagine within themselves the uncomprehended thing: on the contrary, precisely because, in the sight and sound of the cataract, he vividly saw and heard being he *knew* (and not merely imagined) to be infinitely greater than his own. The power of his imagination was not to create a semblance of this infinite being, but to apprehend its positive existence and to unite it to his own spirit. He exulted in his

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personal powers for the very reason that they could bring into his most lively experience something actually outside his personality, and vastly containing it: an experience to which sense and spirit equally contributed. The cataract was *more than himself*: that is why it haunted him. It was not in freedom from reality that his imagination found the expansion it desired, but in knowledge of reality. His passion in the cataract was a passionate intuition of himself living in the real midst of a divine world: the world of things actually seen and heard was divinity recognised by his mind as present to his senses. That is Wordsworth's "nature": experience perfectly combining sense and spirit, perfect equipoise of self against the manifestly more than self. It is the temper of classicism. This is not to say that Wordsworth has no romantic moments. But it is to deny that, in the whole intention of his art, he can be called a romantic merely because, like Cowper and Campbell, he lookt at scenery and liked it. The point is, why did he like it? Not for any romantic reasons; not as mere symbolism of inner emotion; but because to contemplate nature was, for him, to

penetrate with his own experiencing life into the equally actual but infinitely greater life of the world about him—to *know*, with delighted kindling of his consciousness, the existence he really belongs to—the existence which unites in itself the two aspects or attributes of individual mind and universal nature: in fact, by fusing the world within and the world without into a single validity, to surmount that very opposition which romanticism is so intent to feel.

The deceptive persuasions of romantic moments must always be guarded against. After nature, let me just touch on the supernatural. *Faust* has been called a romantic poem; because, no doubt, of certain moments in it. But compare *Faust* with Byron's *Manfred*. Both heroes are introduced to us in the act of picturesque incantation—Manfred in "a Gothic gallery," Faust "in einem hochgewölbten engen gothischen zimmer." But what is the purpose of their incantations, and the gist of their subsequent tragedies? Manfred's art magic is directed wholly on his own spirit: he seeks a purely personal relief from some private mystery

of inexpiable guilt. But Faust's is merely directed *through* his own spirit: its aim is beyond: it is to make intelligible, and thus to mitigate, not Faust's private mystery, but the destiny of mankind, in which the personal enquiry is but one ingredient: though it is, to be sure, the ingredient which happens to be aware of the rest. Here, once more, in the whole result, the romantic temper distinguishes itself from that of classicism: the temper concerned to exploit private raptures of glee or desolation, from the temper which would unite as equals in one reality the life which desires and conceives, and the life which perceives and knows.

But indeed, romanticism being an affair of *temper*, and not of subject or topics, there is no end to the variety of its possible appearances; for all sorts of topics and subjects may embody it—unless we ought to exclude those, if there are any, which are capable only of harbouring the opposite temper: that of realism. The exclusion is likely to be theoretical, however; for the strict antithesis of mutually exclusive romanticism and realism is no doubt itself theoretical. Actually, realism, like romanticism,

makes its appearance as a *tendency :* and the two tendencies may co-exist—in classicism they must co-exist, in an equilibrium of forces. Any attempt to systematise the phenomena of romanticism would therefore be about as hopeful, and as useful, as an attempt to systematize the phenomena of art itself. All I can do, is to mention a few more instances in which some degree of the distinction I have been maintaining reveals itself as the state of things we call romanticism ; and thus to confirm still further the contention, that to recognise romanticism is to recognise some peculiar emphasis on inner experience.

§ 2

I suppose romanticism takes its most obvious form in *egoism.* But if it is its most obvious form, it is by no means a form necessary to romanticism. By egoism I mean an inordinate consciousness of self-importance. There was hardly anything of this in Shelley ; and yet Shelley knew scarce anything of the world but his own fantasies about it : the world

of inexpiable guilt. But Faust's is merely directed *through* his own spirit : its aim is beyond : it is to make intelligible, and thus to mitigate, not Faust's private mystery, but the destiny of mankind, in which the personal enquiry is but one ingredient : though it is, to be sure, the ingredient which happens to be aware of the rest. Here, once more, in the whole result, the romantic temper distinguishes itself from that of classicism : the temper concerned to exploit private raptures of glee or desolation, from the temper which would unite as equals in one reality the life which desires and conceives, and the life which perceives and knows.

But indeed, romanticism being an affair of *temper*, and not of subject or topics, there is no end to the variety of its possible appearances ; for all sorts of topics and subjects may embody it—unless we ought to exclude those, if there are any, which are capable only of harbouring the opposite temper : that of realism. The exclusion is likely to be theoretical, however ; for the strict antithesis of mutually exclusive romanticism and realism is no doubt itself theoretical. Actually, realism, like romanticism,

makes its appearance as a *tendency*: and the two tendencies may co-exist—in classicism they must co-exist, in an equilibrium of forces. Any attempt to systematise the phenomena of romanticism would therefore be about as hopeful, and as useful, as an attempt to systematize the phenomena of art itself. All I can do, is to mention a few more instances in which some degree of the distinction I have been maintaining reveals itself as the state of things we call romanticism; and thus to confirm still further the contention, that to recognise romanticism is to recognise some peculiar emphasis on inner experience.

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he hated and the world he longed for were both impossible, except in a romantic's imagination. He lived almost wholly in his own inner experience. So did Byron; but in an altogether different sense: in the sense, namely, that his whole life was directed inwards to feed, not merely his self-consciousness, but his conscious self-importance. Byron was a man of the world: few poets have known the facts of life so fully and so vividly as he knew them. And brilliantly, at his best, he could transmute his knowledge of life into poetry. There are several distinct colors in his art which are easily assignable to romanticism; some have already been mentioned, and some more will be mentioned presently. But were all these away, his poetry as a whole would still be romantic, for all his intimately real knowledge of the world. For it would still be the poetry of an unremitting egoism. The wealth of his knowledge and the splendor of his objectifying energy have no other purpose than to declare his own inordinate self-importance. Inordinate; but not by any means inexcusable. Were his poetry merely, in the vile phrase which surprised its author, " the pageant

of his bleeding heart," difficult it might well be to excuse it. But it was a much more interesting pageant than that: it was the pageant of one of the most potent and most richly endowed spirits modern Europe has known. And modern Europe is not yet tired of acknowledging this. But it certainly was, through and through, the pageant of self-importance. This egoism does not mean that we are to derive an autobiography from Byron's poetry: that would be to treat romanticism as if its law were that of its perfect opposite—realism. The very fact of his egoism makes it impossible (except perhaps to his noble descendants) to quote his poetry against him: *Manfred* is no evidence of the poet's incest. But his egoism does mean that his poetry has concentrated all its forces on the life within, that whatever stuff has gone to the making of it has been used to celebrate the worth of that life: in a word, that it is wholly romantic.

Egoism, however, may be imagined dramatically. It is dramatized in *Manfred*, but by projection rather than by creation; for the figure of Manfred simply collects and magnifies its author's own life and affairs.

But Shakespeare's *Richard II* is a clear instance of the romanticism that expresses itself in an egoism creatively dramatized. Of Shakespeare's alleged romanticism in general, more will have to be said; but *Richard II*, like *Romeo and Juliet*, belongs to a distinctively romantic phase of his career, in which drama is not so much characterisation revealing an action, as an action consisting of characterisation: or rather, not so much the event itself, as the emotions and imaginations which, characteristically responding to the event, hasten to detach themselves from it and to elaborate themselves for their own sakes. Hence the drama of this phase of Shakespeare's career is not only romantic in spirit but lyrical in technique: it is continually the expression of *escape* out of the substance of life into flights of passion and imagery. (With the speeches of Richard and Romeo, compare those of Macbeth and Lear, in which passion and imagery, instead of escaping out of the substance of life, are endlessly striving to dissolve more and more of its tragic substance into themselves.)

Richard is exquisitely sensitive to the spur of

events ; the instant they touch him, he is elaborating his response into astonishingly subtle complexities of feeling and fantasy ; the event itself is forgotten, he is absorbed in entertaining the mood it started. The play advances in the series of attitudes his egoism assumes. His character is of a kind that has often been described, but has never been so choicely realised as in the tragedy in which Shakespeare dramatized it for the first time : for such characterisation as this had never, I think, been done before. It is perhaps the perfection of egoism ; it has at any rate perfected the mode of its own contemplation ; Byron's, for all its force and intensity, looks naive beside it. For Richard indulges his egoism by continually *dramatizing himself* for his own delectation : he is for ever watching his own behavior, for ever providing the behavior the watcher will applaud, at once an actor of supreme talent and a spectator of scrupulous taste. Whatever part the occasion suggests he instantly assumes and plays to a wonder : and throughout looks on at himself, thrilled with artistic delight in so fine a performance. And, when *that* fastidious conscience

is satisfied in him, how can there be any room for further question in his mind whether he is doing *right?* The attitude is the thing: and there he is always right, exquisitely right both in accomplishment and in appreciation. Indeed, as we watch him, we can hardly but agree with him: the variety of his attitudes, their vividness, passion, naturalness—yes, their sincerity—wholly engage us: as long as the play holds us, inner experience such as this is the only thing that matters—no beauty like this in the world without! Event is nothing: imagination and feeling give life its worth. Egoism such as this can even enjoy its misfortune: for it is the *occasion of attitudes* more exquisite than ever. He, who knew so well how to be the gracefully and contemptuously ruthless young king with his factious nobles and troublesome important old John of Gaunt, is not likely to mistake his part when he returns from Ireland to rebuke mutiny at home: and superbly he plays it—until, suddenly wincing at the spur of new event, the mood changes, and that part is out of date: the mere news of misfortune, approaching long before misfortune itself

has come up with him, is enough to make it so. And at once he has elaborated another, equally successful, attitude: he is the despised deposed king, beautifully defying and beautifully suffering the last indignity, humbly and proudly waiting for death: what else happens to kings *who do no harm?* And so through all the marvellous swiftly varying modulations he plays on this part, until at the end, almost by accident, the attitude for a flash becomes real, and he dies fighting. And, like him, all this while we have forgotten the truth: we have forgotten what his character has actually done in the world about him: probably we have preferred him to Bolingbroke: a truly romantic result!—It was of course a technical necessity that the whole play should be composed in the lyrical vein required by this conception of Richard: the effect of the play would be nullified if Richard stood out in it as a creature belonging to another sort of existence: the habit of his life would have no significance unless it occurred in a world of comparable lives.

As for *Romeo and Juliet*, the romantic egoism

there is of a much more amiable and doubtless of a more admirable kind than Richard's sincere attitudinizing; and its triumph over reality a more signal victory, though nothing like so subtle in its tactics. For this is the victory over death: I mean, the only victory over death that is allowed to mortals—victory over the fear of death. When love must end, death is nothing; it is but to

> shake the yoke of inauspicious stars
> From this world-wearied flesh.

That life should welcome death at the bidding of love—what greater triumph over reality can inner experience attain than that? It is, not merely to conquer, but to annihilate, reality.—Thus, *Romeo and Juliet* may stand as a sufficient instance of that inner experience which is most readily and universally acknowledged to be romantic; the inner experience which anyone may come to rely on as the chief thing life can offer.

Here again, in this matter of egoism, some comparison seems possible between classicism and romanticism. For often enough we hear of egoism in poets pre-eminent for the classicism of their art:

Milton and Goethe, for example. But this is not the egoism we have just been considering: not the poet's sense of such importance in himself that he forgets or discredits the importance of the world he must inhabit; or perhaps makes its importance depend on its ability to nourish his regard for himself. Milton and Goethe (I exclude the latter's adolescent egoism) were interested in themselves, and deeply concerned to cultivate themselves, precisely in order that they might be fit and able to make the world their topic. They devoted their art to the truth of it, and to the destiny of its people; and just because they felt themselves capable of an adequate consciousness of the world were they so vividly conscious of themselves.

But recent literature has a notable instance of the egoism I have claimed for romanticism. Nietzsche's egoism is decidedly a case of self-importance; and there can be no doubt that he regarded himself, nevertheless, as the prophet of latter-day classicism. He attacht himself to the party of Dionysus, indulging the vulgar error that anything Greek must belong to classicism, blinded by his

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education to the fact that the Greek genius could be as romantic as any spirit of the modern world. "Have you understood me?—It is Dionysus or Christ."—But when he puts that supposedly crucial choice before us, we cannot but ask, Has he understood himself? For what does Dionysus stand for? Popular enthusiasm, the inner life, the world well lost, the sense of sin and ecstatic deliverance from it. . . . Then what exactly does this choice mean, this choice to which (he tells us) the whole of his life and work led up? What exactly are we to choose between?—But to consider the case of Nietzsche is to consider yet another form of romanticism—namely, *pessimism*.

Nietzsche was certainly romantic by nature. S(far was he from anything like the Hellenic harmon of being, that his inner life abhorred the life withou as sensitive lungs abhor mephitic vapor. And as w have already noted, his self-importance (like Emp dokles') scarcely stopt short of deifying himsel when he attacht himself to Dionysus' party agai the Apollonian party, he practically identifi himself with the spirit of Dionysus. Now Diony

was so eminently the god of the life within, that Herakleitos (whom Nietzsche endeavoured to admire) calls his worshippers such names as Nietzsche himself might have used of the Salvation Army: "Night-walkers, Magicians, Inspired Persons, Drunken Persons, Mystery-mongers." But Dionysus knew how to flatter Nietzsche's inner life; he gave him the noble motto of *Amor Fati*, and two talismans to ensure it: the romance of the Overman, and the romance of Eternal Recurrence; two sheer notions, which happened to be directly contradictory. But that was nothing to Dionysus; and he left Nietzsche to live in his romances the life of faith, very much as the Christians do. Nicely lookt into, this way of understanding the world is nothing but a way of celebrating self-importance, with the whole world, weighed against it, kicking the beam.

But Nietzsche's self-importance had grandeur in it. Belief in man's perfectibility is, after all, a very handsome delusion; and only a great spirit could enjoy the intellectual splendor of that appalling idea, Eternal Recurrence. And if we can sum Nietzsche

up in his beloved phrase of *Amor Fati*, it is the noblest summation man's life can hope for. But it is especially to be admired, when we remember that Nietzsche had flung himself into the spirit of Dionysus; when we remember that the Overman and Eternal Recurrence were but talismans with which his imagination *protected* itself against the fearful power of that spirit: only in their austere security could his *Amor Fati* survive. For Herakleitos, again, told the truth when he said, in one of his explosive phrases, "Hell and Dionysus are the same." He who submits to Dionysus must, sooner or later, descend into Hell, the hell of pessimism: and well for him if he can take some talisman with him which will prevent him from being utterly blasted there. Nietzsche, it is true, often protests that he has gone beyond pessimism, and has found out how to live above it: and so, in a sense, he has; for he can live in those fiery consolations of his, those tragic romances, the Overman and Eternal Recurrence. (It was part of his consolation, to believe he had invented both those ideas). But the pessimism he ref[illegible] at [illegible], like Schopen-

hauer's, can be distinctly formulated: it is attacht to a particular doctrine. The whole of Nietzsche's thought, nevertheless, in spite of its consoling romances, is pervaded by the essence of a far subtler pessimism than that: by, in fact, submission to the deity of Dionysus—still more, by his assumption of the spirit of that desolating divinity. For that is what Dionysus is: the god of the absolute, the intoxicating desolation. He is the contempt of this world; no shape of thing or thought but he discredits it. He is the mere headlong energy of existence, purposeless, undirected, formless, unending; and he will allow nothing but his own energy to exist. The ceaseless Becoming of things in this world, the endless changes and transformations in our universal speed of things—all this is nothing to the Dionysian rapture. It is just a speck of slag spinning for an instant on the surface of the eternal metal's molten purity. For our world is but a chance vortex in the stream of existence, the mere passing shape of an eddy that has whirled itself into a spurious existence of its own. Its wavering shape, or the brief transport of its

substance, may interest the philosophy that keeps within the eddy.[1] But Dionysus ignores this eddy of a world, and intoxicates his worshippers with the fearful sense of the divine energy rushing into it, through it, and beyond it. For them there can be no known reality, no understood purpose in the world, no safety in the sense of it. He who accepts Dionysus must deny this world, and not only all

[1] As, of course, Herakleitos does; his "Everything flows" is the description of *this* world; and, like all good philosophers, he must abhor the spirit that would deify a presumptuous metaphysic into an *opponent* of this world—the perfection of absurdity!—and then actually worship the *hysterica passio* which this ruinous chimera rouses. For the chimera, as Herakleitos well knew, as Nietzsche himself knew in the religion of his own time, can so clothe itself with emotion that it becomes a destroying angel: absurdity faces reality as an *equal* opponent. Can anything be more absurd than that which professes to exist *not as this world exists?* For what is this world? *Existence:* there can be no other: it is what existence *means.* Precisely, Dionysus professes to exist outside conceivable existence; that is to say, outside existence; for the inconceivable does not exist. Dionysus, like his representatives in later religion, certainly exists: emotion sees to that. It is his *profession* that is absurd, and therefore abhorrent to Herakleitos, and all other sanities. And it is absurd because, even while making this profession, his deity evidently exists *here*—in the minds of his worshippers.

the forms and stabilities which the world may profess to sense and intellect, but all the modes and changes of its nature. That is to say, he must deny all *values*, except the senseless value of energy for ever pouring itself onward, in the fury of its own torrent.

This is to knock the bottom out of the world, and to fall into the void : and this is what it is, to worship Dionysus. This is why, to Herakleitos, who yet preacht the World as Becoming, " Hell and Dionysus were the same." It is the essence of romantic pessimism : the utter disvaluation of the apparent world by belief in the reality of the mere unpurposed energy of existence—the inner life in its purest abstraction. Either it will be a pessimism quite voiceless, and unknown to art (for why communicate to a worthless world a worthless desperation ?) or, if uttered at all, it will be involved in the utterance of some protective consolation—such as the talismanic metaphysics in Nietzsche, or the poetic technique in Leopardi or James Thomson. Thomson, in fact, expressly declares that it is not pessimism itself that inspires *The City of Dreadful*

Night. He feels bound to answer the not unnatural question—If nothing has any value, what is the good of saying so, in such an elaborate music? The reply is,

> Because it gives some sense of power and passion,
> In helpless impotence to try to fashion
> Our woe in living words howe'er uncouth.

It is a sufficient answer. But a sense of power and passion *is* power and passion: the art of poetry, then, can protect Thomson, as it much more notably protected Leopardi, from an absolute pessimism—from an absolute disvaluation of life. For the poet lives in his poetry; and to make out the badness of his world, he must write, and mean to write, a good poem. And just so was Nietzsche protected by his elaboration and enjoyment of metaphysical romances. They summoned power and passion out of him; and it was good to him to find himself in them master of his forces.

But while Nietzsche was proclaiming his deluded classicism, another spirit (who can only seem less energetic because less concerned with self-importance)

was actually achieving classicism. I cannot believe that Carducci's *Odi Barbare* will seem less remarkable, in the long run, than *Also sprach Zarathustra :* except to those who find doctrine more remarkable than art. Now Carducci's poetry is frankly poetry in the first person. But it stands for a spirit most securely aware of itself, and most securely delighting in itself, when it is most keenly conscious of, and can most keenly enjoy, the world apparent round about it. Carducci belongs to the party of Apollo ; he is for the sunlight, and the facts of life brilliantly evident ; and hateful to him are Dionysus and romance and moonlight, and all uncertainty and insecurity of commerce with the apparent world. The egoism of Carducci is, once more, of a quite different order from romantic egoism : it is the egoism of the spirit that delights to know itself capable of receiving the world ; which is not, properly speaking, egoism at all. But I bring in Carducci here, not because he is another instance of what, at any rate, corresponds in classicism with the egoism of romance ; but because he can be an instance also of the pessimism which may, and often

does, occur in classicism. He is aware of the void underneath the appearance of the world:

> L' ora presente è in vano, non fa che percuotere e fugge;
> Sol nel passato è il bello, sol ne la morte è il vero.

That, I think, is pessimistic enough; and the like of it is common in classicism, from Homer onward. There could hardly be completer pessimism than the sentiment, apparently proverbial with the Greeks, which Theognis and Sophokles put into famous verse:

> Not to be born—never to see the sun:
> No worldly blessing is a greater one.
> And the next best is speedily to die,
> And lapt beneath a load of earth to lie!—

as Frere not altogether worthily renders Theognis: a sentiment which would certainly follow from the more precise and sharper pessimism of Shakespeare's

> As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods:
> They kill us for their sport.

Shakespeare here makes Gloucester's pessimism discover something worse than mere emptiness within the shows of things: but neither this nor any other pessimism is the whole conclusion of *King Lear*.

It is mastered by the spirit of classicism ; it may not presume to be more than the truth of a moment ; it is but one mood among many. But Carducci can best tell us how remarkably the pessimism of Apollo differs from the pessimism of Dionysus. For Carducci, though he faces the mood (as classicism must face every possibility in life), yet loathes it perfectly ; not for a moment will he allow himself to be intoxicated by it, as Dionysus would urge. But the chief thing is, the way Carducci protects himself from his pessimism. His safety is, not the specious intellectual romances which Dionysus recommends, and not the mere exertion of a personal talent : but simply the return of his interest to the world of sunlit appearance, the world of Apollo, the divine phantasmagoria of actual existence, in which sense and spirit dissolve into each other : allowing metaphysical values to take care of themselves—or at most allowing them to pretend no more than to add what they can to the value life gives to itself, in this passing appearance of a world—the immediate value of life's delight in the use of all its powers and the excitement of all its faculties : for beyond

that delight, there is no certain value. Life as a whole and life in itself—that is the only metaphysic classicism allows.—It was, of course, precisely this immediate *life-delighting value* which gave their talismanic property to Nietzsche's formidable ideas of Overman and Eternal Recurrence. But in him romanticism claims them rather than classicism, because they led him into Dionysiac notions of value transcending appearance: that is to say, into values unintelligibly yearned for in the raptures of conception freed from the exigencies of perception. If Carducci had used these romantic ideas, they would still have been romantic, but they would have become the romantic elements in an inclusive classicism; philosophy's romancing would have poised itself against and combined with the sense, perhaps, of Lalage's beauty, in a moment of equable, immediate, unmistakable value, as clear as sunlight, and as divinely at home on earth.

§ 3

The principle of romanticism is now, I think, as clear as I can make it. As it works itself out, a

good deal of it may be assigned to one or other of the two main motives suggested by the visions of Empedokles: [life promising itself indefinite betterment in this actual world, and the vision of man's earthly perfection; or life withdrawing from the actual, and the vision of a mystical experience beyond the power of earthly abilities.] But except in the extreme cases, these take so many forms, and shade into each other so frequently, that it is not worth while to attempt any exact classification. The Dionysian pessimism we have just been considering belongs, no doubt, to the latter of these motives; though in the case of Nietzsche it is combined with the vision of perfectible life in the Overman. The motive which completes itself as mysticism may, however, get no further than withdrawal from the actual into the freedom of imagination: as William Morris in *The Earthly Paradise* turns his back on the hated reality of contemporary things, and lets his imagination tell him stories about life as he would like it to be. On the other hand, the vision of life made perfect on earth may take the practical form of revolutionary politics:

as it did in Morris himself who, outside his poetry (which he deliberately kept for the dreams he could not practise—dreams of the past and of legendary things), was the most practical man of his time, and perhaps the most practical romantic of any time. But the connexion between romanticism and revolution, in Heine, Shelley, Byron and so many others, is clear enough: it is but to translate into action the convictions of inner experience. Not only man's mode of life, but man himself, is capable of improvement: that is the belief at the back of it. If you want to understand, for example, the romantic element in Milton, read his pamphlets.

> Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks. Methinks I see her as an eagle mewing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full midday beam, purging and unsealing her long-abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance.

That is what it is, for politics to be romantic—the sion of perfectible man made active in propaganda. isillusion followed, as usual; but disillusion in ilton was itself followed by *Paradise Lost*, our ef monument of classicism, and, in the signific-

ance of its whole fable and conception, our most elaborate figure of man as he actually is, in nature and fortune—man the incarnate imperfection, whose mind and whose world unite in the unresolved discord of "fixt fate, free will": but a discord which, unresolved in actuality, this art can take up and include as such in its sublimely assured harmony. And it shows the security of Milton's classicism, that his conception of man was never in any danger of reaction to the opposite romanticism of the pessimist, of *mere* disillusion. But we know how Milton had delighted in the romances, and we know from the *Epitaphium Damonis* and *Mansus* how deeply he had brooded on a romantic theme for his own epic. It is likely that he would have celebrated man's life in the romantic spirit of his politics, had it not been for their disappointment. Indeed, enclosed in the superb classicism of *Paradise Lost*, is one of the most romantic conceptions in the world—the person of Satan, the *A per se* of romantic rebellion, who, as soon as literary recollection set him free from the divine equipoise in which Milton conceived him, became the ancestor

of innumerable versions of the *romantic hero*, whose face

> Deep scars of Thunder had intrencht, and care
> Sat on his faded cheek, but under Browes
> Of dauntless courage;

like the figure of Redgauntlet, or the figure of himself which Byron put about, or the foolish Rochester and the terrific Heathcliff of the Brontes.

But, of course, revolution has often been the topic of poetry; and not only the quite visionary revolution of Swinburne or *The Revolt of Islam.* The most vigorous motive of Byron's plays is their concern with the realities of political revolution. It is the work of one who knows how affairs go in the actual world: the mixture of purposes, the failure of intention, the dependence on material hazards, in the loftiest design. Nevertheless, the theme is *liberty*, and the sacrifice of every dearest thing to achieve it or testify to it. And by liberty is always understood the liberty to realise some perfection believed inherent in man. For not even a romantic, however he may talk (whether to himself or to others), can believe in liberty pure and simple. It

can only be valued as a means to an end; in itself it has no value whatever. It is easy to see how romanticism will value it. Man can always conceive of himself in a state of life nobler and finer than his present. Set him free from accidental rigors of law and custom, and what he can conceive he can be. The romantic's reliance on the life within makes the further assumption that, in liberty, man will be what he can be. Hence the vigor of revolutionary liberty in Byron's poetry as a motive of tragic action. This frequent concern with setting free man's ideal powers gives a notable color to the sum of his romanticism: a color by no means in conflict with the prevailing hue of his egoism.

But the vision of life's earthly perfection makes quite another sort of appearance in the long and very complicated tradition of pastoral poetry. I cannot trace it out here. It springs from that delicious and most original classicism which Theocritus achieved. His genius devised an exquisitely adjusted reality of life as a whole—knowing and desiring, perceiving and imagining: the compound reality of life's experience of itself and of its world.

It was the impossible accepting possible conditions; not wholly unlike the classicism of Shakespeare's fairies, with the difference that, for fantasy taking on the nature of fact, Theocritus gives us fact taking on the nature of fantasy. Only Theocritus could maintain the poise of this delicate balance of the life within and the life without; out of it there might develop, and did develop, both realism and romanticism. The romanticism came soon enough to be included in the Theocritean sylloge; already, in its Twenty-Seventh Idyll, love, with a pretty unreality quite unlike Theocritus, has begun to assume the Arcadian simplicity, and to be the only thing that matters: the love in which romantic fancy *returns to nature*—the gracefully and innocently carnal courtesy, the charming Utopian animalism, untoucht by spirit and incapable of sin or shame—the love that a later age rediscovered in the South Sea Islands. Marriage needs no more ceremony than the mutual confession of desire. It is only after passion has descended on a casual meeting, and wedlock has been proposed and accepted, that it occurs to the lovers in pseudo-

Theocritus (Id. XXVII) to ask each other who they are. And the guiltless licence of this unnamed country of Daphnis and his girl expands, with the contributions of the Alexandrian novel, into the convention of the pastoral Golden Age, which finally assumes the name of the Arcady that never was, and certainly (if there is anything in economics) never could have been in Arcadia. Vergil transplants it in Italy, with new decoration and a new direction for its idealising desires. Sannazaro establishes the impossible unplaced Arcady as a theme of Renaissance: introducing pure romanticism in the common belief that everything derived from the Greek must be classicism. Tasso's lambent music lets Arcadian romanticism speak out unashamed: for with him the pastoral convention is to repudiate all convention ("onore"), and to make a morality of relying solely on desire: his "bella età de l'oro" is the world whose law is, "S'ei piace, ei lice." Guarini follows with an Age of Gold more discreetly proclaimed, more accommodated to knowledge, and to the morals, of the actual (and thereby rather helplessly compromised), by a

It was the impossible accepting possible conditions; not wholly unlike the classicism of Shakespeare's fairies, with the difference that, for fantasy taking on the nature of fact, Theocritus gives us fact taking on the nature of fantasy. Only Theocritus could maintain the poise of this delicate balance of the life within and the life without; out of it there might develop, and did develop, both realism and romanticism. The romanticism came soon enough to be included in the Theocritean sylloge; already, in its Twenty-Seventh Idyll, love, with a pretty unreality quite unlike Theocritus, has begun to assume the Arcadian simplicity, and to be the only thing that matters: the love in which romantic fancy *returns to nature*—the gracefully and innocently carnal courtesy, the charming Utopian animalism, untoucht by spirit and incapable of sin or shame—the love that a later age rediscovered in the South Sea Islands. Marriage needs no more ceremony than the mutual confession of desire. It is only after passion has descended on a casual meeting, and wedlock has been proposed and accepted, that it occurs to the lovers in pseudo-

Theocritus (Id. XXVII) to ask each other who they are. And the guiltless licence of this unnamed country of Daphnis and his girl expands, with the contributions of the Alexandrian novel, into the convention of the pastoral Golden Age, which finally assumes the name of the Arcady that never was, and certainly (if there is anything in economics) never could have been in Arcadia. Vergil transplants it in Italy, with new decoration and a new direction for its idealising desires. Sannazaro establishes the impossible unplaced Arcady as a theme of Renaissance: introducing pure romanticism in the common belief that everything derived from the Greek must be classicism. Tasso's lambent music lets Arcadian romanticism speak out unashamed: for with him the pastoral convention is to repudiate all convention ("onore"), and to make a morality of relying solely on desire: his "bella età de l'oro" is the world whose law is, "S'ei piace, ei lice." Guarini follows with an Age of Gold more discreetly proclaimed, more accommodated to knowledge, and to the morals, of the actual (and thereby rather helplessly compromised), by a

is the sentiment of our Age of Gold, as our Alexandria conceives it, and we delightedly receive it. The romantic triumph over reality, which made the grim, stingy sheep-walks of Arcadia figure as the pleasant leisure of Elizabethan Arcady, is not more remarkable than, and is exactly comparable with, the transformation of slave-owning, slave-breeding, slave-marketing society into a world of ideal dignity, happiness and domestic security. We are peculiarly fortunate here. We know what the slave-dependent Southern States actually were; we know what popular legend has made of them: and we can trace out the whole intricacy of the process from fact to romance. If anyone wants to see exactly how the spirit of romanticism works—how it compels the stark solid things that have been to deny themselves under its plastic touch and soften into gracious images of things desired—let him read Dr. Gaines on *The Southern Plantation.*[1]

[1] *The Southern Plantation: a study in the development and the accuracy of a tradition*, By Francis Pendleton Gaines. (Columbia University Press.) The literature with which Dr Gaines deals is, artistically, worthless; but it would be difficult to overestimate the worth of the evidence he derives from his minutely

The striking thing is that the romance of the charm of slavery develops, in enormous volume and with extraordinary rapidity, straight out of the literature of a ferocious abolitionist propaganda ; no sooner has literature effected the destruction of slavery than it switches over to sentimental glorification of what it has destroyed : as if the mere emotion that had attacht itself to slavery could not let go, like a wife crying aloud the virtues of the husband she has nagged to death. And this was an entirely popular literature, expressing popular romance ; far more so than the Arcady of the Elizabethans. We get the authentic nature of the business here, and no mere exercise of a literary tradition. It was, for example, in strict obedience to popular feeling that from the very first, the evils of slave-owning society were made

intensive study of this paltry stuff. He gives us something better than the most plausible *speculations about romanticism* ; he gives us an actual exhibition of the whole process of romanticism. It should be said, however, that Dr. Gaines is a quite disinterested witness ; romanticism was not his business, but simply a scientific record of what popular art did with a certain tradition. It merely happens, that the phenomena he records are just what the study of romanticism requires.

the work of a set of professional villains: and that these villains were *Yankees*. Thus the romance of plantation-life not only safely accounted for evils that could not be suppressed, by attributing them to foreign intruders, who could not feel its influence, and coarsely disturbed its harmony; romance also enabled the spirit of slave-owning society to revenge itself on the North by fastening on the very [illegible] who attackt and destroyed it the guilt of its abo[illegible]-tions. And so it has gone on, from novels and [illegible] crowding forward past counting for the [illegible] they could not miss, down to the stock [illegible] imbecility of the music halls: always the [illegible] Arcadia, always the blithe innocence of the [illegible] and their white friends, in which anything [illegible] even unpleasant is at once felt to be [illegible]. [illegible] should popular imagination thus love [illegible] filth of this particular era of greed? [illegible] example, should the hiring *out of* [illegible] be utterly forgotten, and only the old [illegible] be remembered?—But romanticism [illegible] collect the past; it fashions the [illegible] ought to have been. Singing, [illegible]

Quashee is enough to set imagination off, inventing the world which the happy nigger *ought* to symbolize. Once more, with Quashee as its genius, romanticism defies the actual and substitutes for it the desire of the imagination: or rather, the actual becomes mere background of cloudy stuff on which desire may project and so enjoyably inspect its own luminous image.

But I need not go on reckoning up the instances of romanticism. As there are infinite forms of it, so there are infinite degrees of it. Thus, it will always belong to the business of romance, to provide escape from the familiar channels of regular experience; and it need be no more than this.[1] But there are many ways, and many lengths, of escape. It may be into a world as marvellous as *The Ancient Mariner* takes us into; or it may be into the less marvellous adventures and landscapes of insanity, as in Crabbe's remarkable *Sir Eustace Grey* (insanity, as a law to itself, always ready to assist

[1] To avoid misunderstanding, and superfluous qualification, let me remind the reader here of logic. If romance is this provision of escape, this provision of escape is not therefore romance.

romanticism, but obviously lowering the degree of it when deliberately brought in to *explain* astonishing licence of imagination, and thus at the same time provide for the familiar rights of reason); or it may simply be into the exotic world of Byron's oriental poems—and doubtless it is not even necessary for self-regarding passion to be the courier, as it is in Byron's case: gorgeous East or tropic South would suffice by itself. As with place, so with time. Romanticism may be escape into a wholly marvellous *nowhen* as well as into a wholly marvellous *nowhere*. In *Orlando Furioso* we enter a world of quite mythical chivalry and frankly incredible adventure; magic is the thing that counts in Ariosto's warfare, next to impossible prowess: sheer fantasy masquerades here, brilliantly dissembled as human figures and human action. But *Gerusalemme Liberata* noticeably respects reality; Tasso's campaign has a careful regard for strategy: sea-power, for example, is a strict condition of his warfare, as it was in the actual crusade. Tasso is recognisably telling us of things that happened; but the poem for all that is romance, and not primarily because of

its love stories and its magic and Armida: these are but occasional, though culminating, emphases of the romance that pervades the whole texture of the poem. Tasso's chief claim to be a romantic is simply that he obliterates present actuality in the strange splendor of his chivalry (though it is seldom incredible, and perhaps not far off history), and in the unfamiliar sunlight of his imagined historical Palestine. Instead of perennially illuminating actuality, as Homer does, Tasso's imagery dazzles our vision to everything but itself. And, as Byron could be romantic simply by going to the East for the life he wanted, so Walter Scott, with a larger knowledge of the actual world and a firmer sense of its busy solidity than any other novelist has had to draw on, nevertheless had only to look into history for the life he wanted, and out of the things that were gone to evoke affairs of a heartier and more richly coloured habit than the present could offer him: and he too was hailed as a romantic. And certainly he had the romantic quality of *believing in* the past his affectionate imagination had created. He took it as a personal affront, that Hogg, in *The*

Brownie of Bodsbeck, should have made Clavers a repulsive figure quite inconsistent with the gallant picture of him in *Old Mortality*. And it is, perhaps, noteworthy that Scott, for all his moral sanity, was not proof against the romantic glamour of incest the thrilling guilt (it matters not whether it be real or supposed, wilful or involuntary) which puts *The Antiquary*, in spite of the discreet quarantine of its revelation, incongruously beside *The Mysterious Mother*, *Laon and Cythna*, *The Cenci*, *Manfred*, *Parisina*, *Il Re Torrismondo*, *Mirra*, and so many other romantically incestuous escapades from ordinary conduct and normal passion. Nothing more romantic, for example, in the passions of Elizabethan drama, than *A King and No King* and *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*. Wherever romanticism flourishes, incest is likely to appear: a theme romantic precisely in its impassioned discord with conventional decency. But of course the contrary is not true: incest need not produce romance. Sophokles is enough to remind us of that; *Œdipus the King*, the classic case of incest, is classic in another and a nobler sense. Even if incest were

romanticism. My argument is, that to refer romanticism to the principle I have so often mentioned is in itself a sufficient theory; that it is always the essential theory; that it is the only theory which can successfully confront romanticism in any of its vagaries, through the whole range of its variegated appearance. But an account[1] is often given of romanticism with which this explanation seems to bear no relation at all. I believe it is an account which confuses romanticism with a phenomenon often, but by no means necessarily, accompanying it. I should therefore, in order to vindicate my explanation, be able to refer this phenomenon to some process quite independent of romanticism.

The account I mean is that which relies on artistic *form*. The specific contrast is made between the strict and shapely formality of classicism and the easy and unconcerned laxity of romanticism: between the expression which submits to a foreordained and often traditional form imposed in the

[1] For its origin (German, it seems) see Pearsall Smith, S.P.E. Tract, No. 17, *Four Words*.

interest of the whole effect of a work of art, and the expression which refuses to submit to anything tending to restrain the freedom of its parts. This account appeals to music as well as to poetry; but it seems to have originated in poetic criticism, and thence to have invaded the criticism of music. We must ask ourselves, Why it should be supposed that there is any connexion between romantic feeling and laxity of form? And next we must ask, if a tendency to laxity of form can be accounted for without bringing in romanticism? To the first question, the compendious answer is, *Shakespeare*; and out of our consideration of this, the answer to the second will arise.

There is no difficulty at all about making Shakespeare the answer to the first question. I am not thinking now of that distinctly and unmistakably romantic phase of his career which has already been admitted in *Richard II* and *Romeo and Juliet*. Here he devoted his art to giving as its whole effect a glorification of the inner life of feeling and imagination. But it has been also admitted that, elsewhere in his drama—indeed, everywhere in his

drama—romantic *moments* are to be found: not the mere possibility of romance which analysis may discern (as in Sophokles—nay, as in Racine), but authentic moments of the very spirit of romance in absolute command, as fervent, as soaring, as impressive as anywhere in literature. Now the form of drama Shakespeare uses, with its (apparently) loose conjuncture of parts, enables him to elaborate these moments to their utmost emphasis; and enables us, while we are in these moments, to isolate our attention on their immediate effect on us and to retain in our memory their separate impression. I need only mention such obvious instances as Jessica and Lorenzo capping fabulous loves " on such a night " at Belmont, and watching the " patines of bright gold "; or the ghost on the moonlit battlements of Elsinore; or Lear consoling Cordelia as they are led to prison:

> We two alone will sing like birds i' the cage . . .
> And take upon 's the mystery of things
> As if we were God's spies.

The principle of romanticism which I have been maintaining could nowhere be better illustrated.

What wonder, then, if a form of drama which allows of such vivid moments of romantic impression should be regarded as not only associated with romance, but as itself constituting romanticism? The association is so strong, that I dare say the occasions on which I have asserted or implied Shakespeare's drama to belong to classicism have been seriously counted against me and my reading of romance. And yet that, most certainly, is what I do assert. I maintain it, that Shakespeare (outside that youthful romantic phase of his) is, in the whole effect of his plays, as perfectly the dramatist of classicism as Sophokles himself. But they arrive at their classicism by different ways. Sophokles' way enables him to include in his classicism no more than the mere possibility of romance; Shakespeare's classicism can include romance itself, distinctly elaborated into radiantly authentic moments of it. But the whole effect is, in the essential result, the same in both. For it would be ludicrous incompetence, to set down Shakespeare's dramatic form as mere laxity, mere unshapely prominence of the parts, unconcerned

with the impression of the whole. The design of the whole presides over the parts, mastering them to one fore-ordained finality of total impression, as nobly and as effectively in Shakespeare as in Sophokles: and the design is in both the same equipoise, the same harmony, the same just mingling of inner and outer experience, the same refusal to assign peculiar validity either to fact or to desire, the same mutual accommodation of knowledge and imagination, the same clear recognition and yet assured surmounting of the duality of conscious existence—the world and the mind—in one profound acceptance of the whole. In both it is, in fact, that perfectly balanced *health* of life for which the right name is classicism.

The form of Shakespeare's drama represents, therefore, a development or progress of expression (excluding now from "progress," of course, all idea of *improvement*) which seems to have nothing whatever to do with romanticism except that, incidentally to its nature, it admits of an extraordinary insistence on momentary romanticism without endangering the final and stable effect of

its balanced classicism; simply because it admits of the utmost emphasis of its parts without in the least compromising the whole. It is important to note, moreover, that the form of Elizabethan drama, although romanticism may sometimes take complete charge of it (as it does, besides Shakespeare's early work, in *Tamburlaine* and *The Jew of Malta*, for example) can yet exist without any romanticism being present in it at all, as it does in Ben Jonson; and to note as well, that realism (as in *Bartholomew Fair*) can take complete charge of it just as effectively as romanticism, and also that (as in Shakespeare himself and, in a much narrower scope, in Ben Jonson again—in *The Alchemist*, for example) moments of realism can obtrude as distinctly and as vividly as moments of romanticism, without impairing a final classicism. We may well suppose, then, that classicism and romanticism (and also realism) in Elizabethan drama were due, quite independent of the form the art had developed, to the temper in which the form was used: a supposition which leaves the way clear for the same explanation of romanticism here as elsewhere.

So that it is not only advocacy of this explanation, but the actual facts of the case, that make it desirable to account for the progress of dramatic form from Sophokles to Shakespeare without invoking any aid from romanticism. And this, I conceive, is not very difficult.

For art is a kind of language : since, like language, it is essentially *communicative expression*. Language, in the art I have been considering, is the instrument of expression ; but the artistic use of that instrument *is itself a language : the form and custom of poetic* art is a secondary language made out of the first. We might well expect to find, then, in the development of the artistic use of language, something analogous to the development of language itself : the same tendency would be likely to appear in both. We discover linguistic progress when we compare the habit of speech in the modern world (such a habit as that of English, for example) with the habit of ancient speech (such as Latin or Greek). We characterise this change of habit (which is slow, and can only be clearly seen at considerable intervals, and in any case can only be relatively assessed)

as a development from synthesis to analysis. And that is exactly the development we find in the progress of dramatic form from Sophokles to Shakespeare. It is precisely the same change of habit, the same development of expression, as that which we find in the progress from, say, *fuissem* to *I should have been*. Both the word and the phrase have the same complex meaning; but the word arrives at it by the most compact synthesis possible, while the phrase arrives at it by analyzing its elements into separable utterances, which allows any distinct emphasis that may be desired to be put on any part without in the least endangering the sense of the whole combination, but with the advantage of giving many subtle modulations of that whole sense. A more exact analogy of the resembling difference between Sophokles and Shakespeare would, of course, be found in the difference of structure, and the similarity of whole result, which we note when we compare a whole sentence made up of words like *fuissem* with a sentence made out of phrases like *I should have been*: the difference between the two kinds of drama is the difference between synthetic

and analytic *syntax*. The dramatic syntax of a play by Sophokles is like a sentence of Greek or Latin, in which the meaning is so closely compact by reason of the inflection of the words, and evidently interlockt by reason of the concord of the words, that the parts have no individual function, and yield *no expression separable from the solidarity of the* total significance: they exist in a manner entirely at the discretion of the whole. But the dramatic syntax of a play by Shakespeare is like an English sentence, in which the words, freed from the duties of inflection and concord, and thus owing no formal allegiance to the government of the whole, make their individual function so assertive, that the total significance exists in a manner entirely at the discretion of the parts. The distinct scenes of Shakespeare's drama are like the distinct phrases or grammatical idioms of an English sentence, asserting their individual quality built up out of the consent of uninflected, unconcording words to order their meaning in a certain way. But, given that consent, it is only to superficial notice that the resulting analytic syntax seems more lax or casual than the

syntax of a more synthetic form of expression. The whole result is just as decisive and, when it arrives, as dominating over imagination, in analytic drama as in synthetic: in *Othello* or *Hamlet* as in the *Ajax* or the *Antigone*: just as the final unity of meaning is just as plain in an English as in a Greek sentence. But the analytic syntax, whether of drama or of language, is much more flexible and variable, much more capable of momentary emphasis, than the synthetic: though no doubt the gain is fully paid for by the loss. In the case of Shakespeare, however, our gain is, that romance is elaborated, within the scope of drama, to the height of its possibility, without injury to a finally resulting classicism. I have considered Shakespeare as the type of that apparent laxity of form which has sometimes been identified with romanticism. The development of the syntax of artistic expression from synthesis to analysis is, however, as general, as natural and inevitable, as the corresponding development of linguistic syntax: Latin into Italian, for example, or Anglo-Saxon into English.[1] It is, perhaps, the

[1] Bishop Hurd's *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* give, in his summary of *The Faery Queene*, a brilliant exposition of analytic

development of painting from Michel Angelo to Degas, of music from Bach to Debussy. Except for the advantage it may take of the change of habit, romanticism has nothing to do with it; and when the history of the change has been studied, romanticism will scarcely seem the most important beneficiary of the change. Synthesis and analysis are, in art as in language, relative terms. Probably Dante will come to be regarded as the first of the distinctively analytic poets—the first poet of the modern way of taking the world: that is to say, out of vivid discrimination of the elements, and minute separate attention to them, to build up the great masses of experience. And it may be supposed, that when critics marvel, and ingeniously speculate, on the presumed inability of the ancients to see colors, or, more generally, to delight in nature, as we do—they are probably mistaking the methods of synthetic art for those of analytic art. If an ancient poet omitted to say that the sea was green, or that he

form, or organic unity, in non-dramatic poetry It may well serve as a type of the apparent disintegration which turns out to be a new habit of coherence.

enjoyed looking at it, it was possibly because it had not occurred to him to analyse experience into such separable elements as these. It was sufficient for him, that they were included in the synthesis of his impression; and could be understood in the synthesis of his expression.

Closely related with this question of a supposed connexion between romanticism and the freedom of form which turns out to be the form assumed by analytic expression, is the notion (already hinted at) that romanticism is a rejection of artistic etiquette in favor of unconditional sincerity of expression. For if expression is to be perfectly sincere, it must derive its law solely from the particular emergency of each individual case, and not from some habit or inertia of tradition. This was noticed as early as Hurd's *Letters on Chivalry and Romance*. The clear-sighted bishop, arguing from *The Faery Queene*, says of the contrast between classic and Gothic (i.e. romantic): "The unity and simplicity of the former are more complete; but the latter has *that sort of unity and simplicity, which results from its nature.*" The notion is likely to

flourish wherever criticism favors romance. For romantic criticism, in maintaining the rights of the inner life, is as apt to resent the imposition of external rules, as romantic imagination is to resent the imposition of technique by authority. Thus Manzoni, in the famous preface to *Il Conte di Carmagnola*, says: "Every composition offers in itself to him who would examine it, the elements required for the formation of a judgement." And he goes on to collect the whole business of literary criticism into three great questions: What did the author attempt? Was it a thing worthy of being attempted? Has his attempt succeeded?

But is there anything specifically romantic here? Surely this method of criticism is mere cool common sense; valid for romanticism, indeed, but equally valid also for every other mood or intention in which art may exist. Manzoni has simply, in a manner entirely consonant with his genius, settled criticism on its solid foundations. And as for sincerity, how can any art succeed if it is insincere? For art must be expression; and insincere expression is a contradiction in terms—expression

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which is not expression. When art accepts traditional form merely because it is traditional form, art does not live very long: and literary history is strewn with its corpses. But artistic expression can only occur within the limits of a certain medium; the tradition of an art is nothing but the accumulated knowledge of the use of a medium within its limits. Owing to the limits naturally arising from the kind of medium employed, many varieties of imagination will find themselves using a similar form of expression: it is the form, however similar, suitable within the medium to certain varieties of the living imagination. Romanticism, insisting on its own peculiar life, likes to be sure that it is as exactly suited as the nature of its medium will allow. But this need not prescribe, within the medium, one kind of form more than another. It is true that the synthetic form of drama is the very thing for the classic Racine; but it is the very thing also for the romantic Alfieri, in whose art a stern strictness of form serves to emphasise extravagance of passion, as compression of phrasing serves to set off rhetorical diction. Just so, for the intention of classicism,

Shakespeare used, and developed to the utmost, the analytic form of Elizabethan drama; which Fletcher, the incorrigible romantic, found exactly serviceable for romantic purposes.

§ 5

But is there nowhere in art a romanticism which may truly be called the romanticism of form? I think there is; and I think that it has lately been very noticeable.

It has been throughout my contention, that romanticism is a humor, an attitude of mind, a habit of experience. It therefore concerns the conception of a work of art, not the technique of its expression. Now form in poetry is a matter of technique: it is the means by which the final impression of a poem is organised into a whole, the means by which a particular quality is given to the total impression: in a word, it expresses the peculiar unity of the conception. The same is true of music. But in painting and sculpture, form not only belongs (as design or composition) to the

technique by which the matter conceived is exprest: the form by which this is done is itself a property of the matter conceived. That is to say, the form of things seen is modified and assumed into the form which expresses *the whole experience of seeing things;* and I need not say, that in that experience much more is involved than the mere *sight* of things: the sight of them *means* something, it carries a peculiar complex of emotions. And especially it suggests a tendency towards symmetry, proportion, and pattern which only imagination can complete—a tendency which notably contributes to the painter's characteristic stirring of emotion.

Here, then, is form which is a property of inspiration, and does not merely belong to the technique of expressing inspiration: for here is an enjoyment of the form of natural things which the form of art must express—it must express the delighted notice of a tendency to which imagination instantly responds. That is to say, here is form involved in the attitude of mind, or habit of experience, out of which inspiration emerges. Here, therefore,

is form out of which that special kind of inspiration called romanticism may emerge: a state of things we cannot find in music or poetry. For romantic form in painting must begin as natural form; but there is no natural form for music or poetry.

How, then, can *romantic form* in painting or sculpture emerge? By relying on that symmetry, that proportion, that pattern, which natural form can only suggest, which only imagination can complete. Consider, for example, a landskip: emotions of peace, or majesty, or wildness, may be provoked by the sight of it, and the technique of painting is capable, through formal manipulation, of their expression: that is, of communicating them by suitably providing their visual stimulus. The result will be romantic, according to the emphasis put on them (Claude and Turner, for examples). But such emotions are inseparable from the things of outer experience; and can only be expressed by painting in manipulated terms of outer experience. This is not enough for some romantics. In order to confine emotion wholly to the life within (which means, in a romantic's notion of things, to purify it

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of the inessential), a painter must rely on the perfect form which only his imagination can discern in the welter of things perceived. What is called their abstract form, or geometrical form, is therefore exprest in painting, as their reality disengaged from the deceits and unnecessary perplexities of our common visual experience. The thing that gives the painter a peculiar delight in this common experience is the suggestion in the objects he sees of a formality more exquisite than anything he can actually see. If he is a romantic, his art will be perfectly to establish this delight by allowing his formal imagination to continue the desire provoked by natural shape until it has satisfied itself. The sight of things is purified into its essential geometry; and so we have *cubism*, or however the movement may be named, relying, like all other romantic movements, on the inner energy of life—on the perfect shapes which can only occur imaginatively. Thus it is in painting and sculpture, that *form* can image the life which finds itself in the thing desired rather than in the thing known: which is the essence of romanticism. The expression of desire for a world

of absolute shapeliness becomes romantic when it declines to recognise the claims of the world that actually exists.

The only thing in poetry or music which can be compared with the *abstract form* of modern painting or sculpture is the *prescribed form* in Provençal poetry. There is nothing like this in any music which is independent of words; nothing like this in any poetry which precedes the Provençal. There is no music which prescribes an exact form of notes for a certain kind of occasion; there is, outside the Provençal and its descendants, no poetry which prescribes an exact form of words for certain occasions. But in Provence, the paradise of romance, emotion itself took form: and itself was exprest as form in Provençal poetry. Whatever went to substantiate it, the form was the all-important thing: whatever the poetry said, it mattered less that it should be intelligible than that it should fulfil perfectly and precisely the abstract form: the form was the real inspiration. It is as near as we can get in poetry to the geometrical form which inspires the modern romanticisms of painting and

sculpture: as near as we can get, that is, to the inner experience which, as absolute form, believes in itself at the expense of the way things actually shape themselves.

But is not the painting of classicism a formal art? Of course it is: but formal as Sophokles is formal, not as Provençal poetry is formal. The art of Pollaiuolo or Michel Angelo is classicism not only because it is severely, noticeably and grandly formal; but because the image of this formality, this desirable symmetry, is at the same time the image of things actually and vividly known. The claims of inner and outer experience are married; as they are in the rigorous fable and lavish humanity of Sophoklean tragedy. But Provençal poetry restricts its humanity in the interests of its unqualifiable formality; and just so—that is to say, just as romantically—the inner passion for perfect shapeliness asserts itself at the expense of the known appearance of things in the art of El Greco, Blake, Gauguin or Matisse. It asserts itself still more remarkably in savage art. The savage mind is peculiarly liable to place its reliance on the life

within: for it is, of course, peculiarly liable to be commanded by superstition. Between the degrees of civilisation and the varying power of romanticism there is no necessary connexion; as indeed there is none between civilisation and art. The paintings of the Altamira caves show how realistic savage art can be; if they do not rather show, that savage art can partake of the nature of classicism as surely as the art of civilisation. But commonly savage art is, past mistake, romantic. The superb statues from Easter Island which, to the disgrace of our custodianship, are placed *outside* the British Museum, show the romanticism of savage art at, perhaps, its highest accomplishment. Certainly, there is very little classic or civilised art which, for power, can be compared with these figures: but theirs is a power which makes itself felt wholly in the scornfully uncompromising geometry of their features. (Compare with this the larger, nobler, but not more intense power of classicist art in the Chinese T'ang statue of the Buddhist apostle, which the British Museum certainly does know how to house securely, if not worthily: the statue which is,

perhaps, the grandest thing in London. There is here no conflict, but a harmony, of geometry and nature.) Certainly, it is not without significance that the art of the West African idol-maker, which manipulates humanity into barbarous images of lordly superstition, should seem to some of the romantic artists of to-day to provide models of the perfection they aspire to. For this at any rate shows romanticism at last willing to acknowledge simply and frankly *itself*, undisturbed by any prejudices or considerations that may occur outside it: that is to say, it shows romanticism willing to recognise itself in a certain attitude of mind, or habit of experience, however this may be embodied—to recognise itself, namely, in the habit of releasing and relying on the life within, in the attitude of attending peculiarly to the motions of inner experience—accepting what they affirm as freely as it ignores what they omit.

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